



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

NELSON SMITH
COMMISSIONER

DEPARTMENT OF
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

Post Office Box 1797
Richmond, Virginia 23218-1797

Telephone (804) 786-3921
Fax (804) 371-6638
www.dbhds.virginia.gov

May 1, 2022

The Honorable Janet D. Howell, Chair, Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Barry Knight, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
14th Floor, Pocahontas Building
900 East Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senator Howell and Delegate Knight,

Item 326 E of the 2021 Appropriations Act provides for \$2,142,601 in FY 2021 and \$4,282,202 in FY 2022 for surveillance and testing costs for the patients and staff to manage COVID-19 outbreaks at state facilities. The language states:

Out of this appropriation, \$2,142,601 the first year and \$4,282,202 the second year from non-general funds is provided for the surveillance and testing costs of residents and staff in order to avoid and manage COVID-19 outbreaks at state facilities. The department shall coordinate with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and local health districts as appropriate to coordinate its testing and surveillance activities in order to access federal ELC Enhancing Detection Expansion grant funding provided to VDH through the Centers for Disease Control. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) shall report quarterly to the Secretary of Finance and the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees on the expense of these funds, including the number of tests administered.

COVID-19 testing has been conducted at all DBHDS facilities based on plans coordinated with VDH since the onset of the pandemic in 2021. The testing protocols have varied depending on the rate of infections within each facility and the input of the local health departments serving the area where the facility is located. In facilities that have experienced outbreaks, this testing has occurred as frequently as twice per week for all individuals receiving services as well as all staff who might come into contact with a potentially COVID-19 positive individual.

Current Status of Testing and Expenditures

During the past year, there have been COVID-19 outbreaks at individual facilities that led the local health departments to recommend halting admissions for periods of time from 14 to 28 days, depending on the type of individuals that the particular facility serves. Where these plans

have been enacted, admissions have been restarted at facilities after the agreed-upon period of quarantine has elapsed. During these periods of quarantine, testing has been conducted more frequently and has, at times, been required of all patients as well as direct care staff. There were periodic limits on or closures to state facility admissions in some of the state hospitals during the latter part of the first quarter, during the second quarter and during the early part of the third quarter due to needing to activate and maintain quarantine and isolation units. Currently, however, there are no state facilities that are closed to admissions due to COVID-19.

The Omicron variant of COVID-19 increased the number of COVID-positive staff and patients in state facilities which, in turn, increased the amount of and expenditures for testing during the latter part of the second quarter of FY 2022 and the early part of the third quarter of FY 2022. There were also enhanced numbers of tests required for unvaccinated staff during the early part of the third quarter that were not required during the latter part. There were also decreases in the number of staff and patient COVID infections as the quarter progressed. These two factors led to decreasing numbers of tests utilized for each month during the third quarter.

There were 8,131 COVID-19 tests administered at DBHDS state facilities during the first quarter of FY 2022, although these were not funded from 326.E as most facilities had stocks of testing materials on hand. During the second quarter, this increased to 14,823 tests administered. During the past (third) quarter, the number of tests utilized increased to a total of 18,961. Each month of the third quarter, however, fewer tests were utilized with 9,609 tests being administered in January, 5,574 tests being administered in February and 3,778 tests being administered in March. While there was still some availability of tests acquired from previous quarters of FY 2022, there was \$189,218.17 utilized from the 326.E Appropriations during the second quarter and \$42,915.31 during the third quarter of FY 2022.

Current Status of 326.E Appropriations

The federal ELC Enhancing Detection Expansion grant was awarded to VDH in August 2021. To receive these federal funds from VDH, DBHDS needs to be a sub-recipient. DBHDS has worked with VDH to establish a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to create the required relationship and the structure to meet federal sub-recipient guidelines required by the grant. This MOA was signed in October 2021. Distribution of funds will continue on a monthly basis to DBHDS, as the grant is disbursed through reimbursement. Because the appropriation for FY2021 was allocated retroactively, exact expenditures for this item are not available for FY2021. The total expenditures for this item for FY2022, through April 1, 2022 are \$232,133.

Sincerely,

Nelson Smith
Commissioner, Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services

CC:
The Honorable John Littel, Secretary of Health and Human Resources