



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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COMMISSIONER

DEPARTMENT OF  
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March 4, 2025

To: The Honorable Stephen E. Cummings, Secretary of Finance  
The Honorable Louise L. Lucas, Chair, Senate Finance & Appropriations  
Committee  
The Honorable Luke E. Torian, Chair, House Appropriations Committee

From: Nelson Smith, Commissioner, Department of Behavioral Health and  
Developmental Services

RE: Item 317.D., 2022 Acts of Appropriation

Item 317.D. of the 2022 Acts of Appropriation requires the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to report quarterly on COVID-19 outbreaks and testing in state facilities. Specifically, the language reads:

*D. In order to avoid and manage COVID-19 outbreaks at state facilities, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services shall coordinate its testing and surveillance activities with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and local health districts for the purpose of accessing federal ELC Enhancing Detection Expansion grant funding provided to VDH through the Centers for Disease Control. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services shall report quarterly to the Secretary of Finance and the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees the expense of these funds, including the number of tests administered.*

Please find enclosed the report in accordance with Item 317.D. DBHDS staff are available should you wish to discuss this request.

cc: The Honorable Janet V. Kelly, Secretary of Health and Human Resources



Virginia Department of Behavioral Health  
and Developmental Services

# **Quarterly Report on COVID-19 Outbreaks and Testing in State Facilities**

**January 15, 2024**

***DBHDS Vision: A Life of Possibilities for All Virginians***

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## **Preface**

Item 317.D. of the 2023 Acts of Appropriation requires the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to report quarterly on COVID-19 outbreaks and testing in state facilities. Specifically, the language reads:

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# **Item 317. D Quarterly Report on COVID 19 Outbreaks and Testing in State Facilities**

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## **Background**

COVID-19 testing has been conducted at all DBHDS facilities based on plans coordinated with VDH since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. Testing protocols have varied depending on the rate of infections within each facility in collaboration with 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 and all staff who may come into contact with a potentially COVID-19 positive individual. Testing protocols utilized at this time are consistent with revisions recommended by VDH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## **Current Status of Testing and Expenditures**

During the first year of the COVID-19 Pandemic, in 2020, local health departments recommended halting admissions to state facilities experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks based on the size of the outbreak, ability to implement infection control procedures and isolation protocols, as well as critical staffing levels. Depending on the population of individuals served at each facility, new admissions were not accepted for up to 28 days based on local and state VDH recommendations and safe facility operations. Facilities restarted admissions once the agreed-upon quarantine and isolation periods ended. During these periods of quarantine, testing was conducted more frequently and had, at times, been required of all patients and direct care staff. There were only brief COVID-19 outbreak-related closures at two DBHDS facilities during the second quarter of FY 2023. Additionally, there were no closures of state facility beds due to COVID-19 outbreaks during the third quarter of FY 2023. During FY 2024, state facilities remained open to admissions during intermittent COVID-19 outbreaks mainly due to improved staffing levels, less severe patient outcomes as a result of COVID-19 positivity, consistent implementation of COVID-19 protocols and infection control measures.

At the beginning of the third quarter in FY 2022, increased testing was required for unvaccinated staff. Protocols were revised in that same quarter reducing the testing requirement. This led to decreasing numbers of tests utilized for each month between the third and fourth quarters. State facilities continue to implement testing strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and implement appropriate quarantine and isolation protocols commiserate with results and operational needs.

There were minimal increases in the number of positive patient and staff COVID tests during portions of FY 2022 Q4 and FY 2023 Q1, likely due to the BA.5 variant. The demand for tests increased in FY 2023 Q4 and has continued in the first two quarters of FY 2024. Additional funds were utilized in the third quarter of FY 2023 and in the second quarter FY 2024, but those appear to be retroactive funds for tests ordered during the previous quarters received and/or were paid for in previous FY quarters. Grant fund expenditures for state facilities also include personnel, training, personal protective equipment (PPE), infection prevention supplies, vaccines, and laboratory testing supplies.

The number of tests administered by DBHDS facilities and the expenditures by the state facilities from the funds provided through 326E (FY 2022) and from the federal grant funds (FY 2023-Q2 FY 2024) are as follows:

| <b>Fiscal Year</b> | <b>Quarter</b> | <b>Tests Administered</b> | <b>326E or Grant Funds Utilized</b> |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2022               | 1              | 8,131                     | \$35,770.50                         |
| 2022               | 2              | 14,823                    | \$80,785.38                         |
| 2022               | 3              | 18,961                    | \$167,719.50                        |
| 2022               | 4              | 1,142                     | \$155,526.12                        |
| 2023               | 1              | 1,622                     | \$118,671.85                        |
| 2023               | 2              | 1,269                     | \$147,352.53                        |
| 2023               | 3              | 967                       | \$199,894.56                        |
| 2023               | 4              | 4,665                     | \$97,285.55                         |
| 2024               | 1              | 12,105                    | \$69,728.29                         |
| 2024               | 2              | 11,236                    | \$145,587.82                        |

### **Current Status of 317.D Appropriations**

The federal ELC Enhancing Detection Expansion grant was awarded in August 2021 to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). To receive these federal funds from VDH, DBHDS needs to be a sub-recipient. DBHDS 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 initially signed in October 2021 and last renewed in July 2023. These funds will continue to be distributed monthly to DBHDS as the grant is received as reimbursement.