

Rockefeller Foundation Report: NCDHHS COVID-19 Testing Policies Set National Example

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The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' work to increase COVID-19 testing access, including its innovative universal testing strategy within skilled nursing facilities, has been cited as a national model in the Rockefeller Foundation's [newly-released](#) National COVID-19 Testing & Tracing Action Plan.

"Throughout our response to COVID-19 in North Carolina, we have taken a comprehensive approach to protecting long-term care residents, including robust testing protocols," said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen, M.D. "This is an unprecedented moment, and states are relying upon one another to determine best practices"

Developed by dozens of public health leaders, including experts from the Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy, the [National COVID-19 Testing & Tracing Action Plan](#) identifies best practices and recommendations to improve testing in the U.S. It singles out NCDHHS' long-term care testing initiative: "The state of North Carolina, supported by CVS Health, has begun testing all residents and staff ... this baseline testing is in addition to screening tests in facilities where there is at least one confirmed case of COVID." The Rockefeller-convened experts also praise North Carolina's work to reduce cost barriers, noting that NCDHHS will "act as payer of last resort for all screening tests for those without symptoms, removing a key barrier to such testing."

In June, NCDHHS partnered with Omnicare, a CVS Health company, to make facility-wide testing available to residents and staff in all North Carolina skilled nursing facilities. There are more than 400 nursing homes in the state with approximately 36,000 residents and more than 30,000 staff.

NCDHHS' work to reduce cost barriers and ensure universal testing in long-term care facilities is a critical component of its broader testing and tracing strategy, which is bringing urgently-needed testing resources to higher-risk settings and historically-underserved communities.

NCDHHS is currently surging testing and contact tracing resources in communities that have been hardest hit by COVID-19. The department has contracted with multiple vendors to deploy [up to 300 no-cost testing sites](#) in African American, LatinX/Hispanic and American Indian communities that currently have limited testing sites.

A full list of community testing events is available on the [NCDHHS COVID-19 website](#).