

How the Juvenile Rehabilitation agency set up COVID-19 testing at community facilities

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Field

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CATEGORY: Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families Juvenile Rehabilitation supports on-site nurses at community facilities to make COVID-19 testing and case management more efficient.



The “What”

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (WADCYF) Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) supports eight (8) community facilities that house Washington state's highest-risk youth during their detention period. These facilities are located throughout the state and do not have dedicated medical professionals. They depend on community medical providers to provide medical care.

During COVID-19 outbreaks or suspicion of COVID-19 in a facility, staff would have to drive residents in vans to local testing sites. This only worsened close contact and increased risk of infectious disease transmission. With already limited staff and facility resources it was difficult to regularly make van trips to local testing facilities, leading to less frequent testing than recommended. This resulted in missing cases and increasing exposures within the facility. Less frequent testing also meant exposed residents had to endure extended isolation periods (14 days), causing them to miss important programming such as school, work, and treatment groups. The long medical isolation can also significantly impact a young person's mental health.

Using Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) funding, WADCYF JR placed COVID nurses at each facility to set-up a satellite COVID-19 testing site and manage cases. Each site was overseen by a healthcare administrator, who is a medical professional at a larger institution. Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) waivers were amended, and COVID nurses provided training and certification to staff so they could conduct rapid antigen testing at the facility.



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The “So What”

This new approach for on-site testing greatly improved COVID nurses’ ability to monitor cases and manage isolation procedures. This resulted in fewer potential exposures, leading to less spread of COVID-19 throughout the facility. On-site COVID-19 testing reduced strain on staff resources and interruptions related to van trips for testing. Frequent testing allowed for more timely isolation of infected residents and staff from the non-infected, and helped non-infected residents avoid extended isolation periods.

The “Now What”

WADCYF JR continues to have on-site rapid antigen testing and COVID nurses are able to efficiently monitor COVID-19 in community facilities. Continued surveillance and regular testing minimizes transmission within the facility, as well as within the community via staff and when residents interact with the public at work and school. Consistent interaction with on-site nurses can also promote the overall health of the residents.

With continued funding, WADCYF JR can use nurses to provide more opportunities to broaden health outreach in its facilities. This can include resources and capacity for other communicable disease testing, health education to residents and staff, and build resilience and respond quickly to future outbreaks in these settings.

Key contributors to this project include Taylor Pitts, Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families – Juvenile Rehabilitation.