



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**This is an official
MS Health Alert Network (HAN) Alert**

MESSAGE ID: MSHAN-20210603-00521-ALT (Health Alert)
RECIPIENTS: All Physicians, Hospitals, ERs, ICPs, NPs, and
Healthcare Providers – Statewide
Thursday, June 3, 2021
SUBJECT: Enhanced SARS-CoV-2 Variant Strain Surveillance

Dear Colleagues,

- As reported previously by a Health Alert Message distributed May 21, 2021 ([14227.pdf \(ms.gov\)](#)), MSDH identified a number of SARS-CoV-2 B.1.351 variant strains associated with long-term care outbreaks in Forrest and Covington Counties.
- To date, a total of 13 B.1.351 variant cases have been identified in Mississippi, 11 associated with these two outbreaks.
- Of the 13 B.1.351 cases, 11 have been identified in Forrest County (one unrelated to an outbreak), 1 identified in Covington County, and one identified in Harrison County directly associated with travel.
- Long-term care cases and outbreaks are often reflective of the current transmission within the broader community and among other long-term care facilities.
- Ongoing surveillance testing of long-term care employees in Covington, Jones, Forrest, and Lamar Counties has not identified additional B.1.351 variant cases to date.

Enhanced Surveillance Request

In order to broaden community surveillance to identify additional B.1.351 and other SARS-CoV-2 variant cases, MSDH is asking providers and hospitals in Covington, Jones, Forrest and Lamar Counties to consider submission of the following to the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory (MPHL) for genomic sequencing:

- Submission of positive PCR samples from outpatient settings in the community or from hospitalized patients to the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory (MPHL) for sequencing. MPHL will accept remnant PCR samples.
- PCR or antigen positive contacts to any known SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern or interest within the prior 14 days. (Note: individuals with a positive antigen result will need to have a specimen collected and submitted for PCR testing and sequencing).
- Suspected Re-infection-Individuals with a positive COVID-19 RNA test ≥ 90 days after the initial laboratory confirmed infection, whether symptomatic or not. MSDH is interested in conducting genomic sequencing at the MPHL even if there are not paired respiratory specimens available (i.e., respiratory sample from the initial infection is not available).



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- Suspected vaccine failures-Fully vaccinated individuals with a positive viral test (antigen or PCR) ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine (only PCR samples are requested for submission to MPHL for genomic sequencing).

Specimen Requirements for Enhanced Variant Surveillance Testing

- Respiratory specimens, including nasopharyngeal, oropharyngeal, nasal mid-turbinate, and anterior nares (nasal swab) specimens placed immediately after collection into a sterile transport tube containing 2-3mL of either viral transport medium (VTM), a Universal Transport Medium (UTM) appropriate for viruses or sterile saline.
Note: The MPHL cannot accept direct swabs for surveillance testing.
- Submit the entire original specimen or at least 500 μ L of the original specimen in a screw cap tube.
- Label the tube with a minimum of the patient's first and last name and Date of Birth.
- Package specimens as Category B. Specimens may be shipped refrigerated if within 72 hours of collection or frozen on dry ice if more than 72 hours after collection. Please contact the MPHL Training Office at 601-576-7582 if assistance is needed with a dry ice shipment.
- Complete a MSDH SARS-CoV-2 Virus Surveillance form, 1198- S for each specimen.

Resources for sample submission to MSDH MPHL

- MSDH Enhanced Surveillance Submission Recommendations:
https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/resources/13625.pdf
- MPHL SARS-CoV-2 Enhanced Surveillance Submission Requisition:
https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/resources/14128.pdf

As always, please contact the MSDH Office of Epidemiology with questions at 601-576-7725.

Regards,

Paul Byers, MD
State Epidemiologist



Alerting Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency:	Mississippi State Department of Health
Alerting Program:	MS Health Alert Network (MS HAN)
Message Identifier:	MSHAN-20210603-00521-ALT
Program (HAN) Type:	Health Alert
Status (Type):	Actual ()
Message Type:	Alert
Reference:	MSHAN-00521
Severity:	Unknown
Acknowledgement:	No
Sensitive:	Not Sensitive
Message Expiration:	Undetermined
Urgency:	Undetermined
Delivery Time:	600 minutes

Definition of Alerting Vocabulary and Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency:	A unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.
Alerting Program:	The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.
Message Identifier:	A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation (MSHAN-yyymmdd-hhmm-TTT (ALT=Health Alert , ADV=Health Advisory , UPD=Health Update , MSG/INFO=Message/Info Service)).
Program (HAN) Type:	Categories of Health Alert Messages.
Health Alert:	Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
Health Advisory:	Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
Health Update:	Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.
Health Info Service:	Provides Message / Notification of general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.
Status (Type):	
Actual:	Communication or alert refers to a live event
Exercise:	Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
Test:	Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded



Message Type:

Alert: Indicates an original Alert
Update: Indicates prior alert has been Updated and/or superseded
Cancel: Indicates prior alert has been cancelled
Error: Indicates prior alert has been retracted

Reference: For a communication or alert with a Message Type of “Update” or “Cancel”, this attribute contains the unique Message Identifier of the original communication or alert being updated or cancelled. “n/a” = Not Applicable.

Severity:

Extreme: Extraordinary threat to life or property
Severe: Significant threat to life or property
Moderate: Possible threat to life or property
Minor: Minimal threat to life or property
Unknown: Unknown threat to life or property

Acknowledgement: Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required (Yes or No).

Sensitive:

Sensitive: Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
Not Sensitive: Indicates non-sensitive content

Message Expiration: Undetermined.

Urgency: Undetermined. Responsive action should be taken immediately.

Delivery Time: Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert (15, 60, 1440, 4320 minutes (.25, 1, 24, 72 hours)).