

AB 1105 FRONTLINE HEALTH CARE WORKER WEEKLY COVID-19 TESTING

Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez

BACKGROUND

Protection of health care workers and their families from the acquisition of Covid-19 in hospitals is paramount, and underscored by rising numbers of health care worker deaths internationally, nationally, and statewide. In previous epidemics, health care worker screening programs have boosted morale and potentially reduced long-term psychological sequelae.

Another major consideration is the protection of vulnerable patients from a potentially infectious workforce, particularly as social distancing is not possible whilst caring for patients. Early identification and isolation of infectious health care workers may help prevent onward transmission to patients and colleagues, and targeted infection prevention and control measures may reduce the risk of health care-associated outbreaks.

PROBLEM

Failure to test and trace all Covid-19 infections has resulted in undetected transmission, delaying critical treatment, and hastening the virus' spread.

California health care facilities continue to put nurses, other health care workers, and their patients at risk of exposure and infection by this virus. Nurses report inadequate screening of patients admitted to hospitals and other health care facilities, including that not all patients are tested before arrival and that in some cases procedures are performed while patients' test results are still pending. By not screening all patients, hospitals fail to ensure proper precautions are in place to prevent transmission within the facility.

Athletes, such as professional and college basketball, football, baseball players are routinely tested, sometimes daily, but health care workers who save lives cannot find out easily if they have Covid-19.

On November 25, 2020, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued guidance for the weekly testing of health care workers. In order to protect health care workers, patients, and the overall community, now and in the future, this guidance must be codified.

SOLUTION

AB 1105 recognizes that testing must be made readily available to nurses and health care workers, regardless of symptoms and without cost. This bill requires general acute-care hospitals to »

- » Develop and implement weekly Covid-19 screening testing of health care personnel who may have been exposed to or have signs/symptoms consistent with Covid-19 (regardless if they are symptomatic or asymptomatic).
- » Continue implementing other infection prevention and control interventions including monitoring all health care personnel and patients for signs and symptoms of Covid-19, universal masking, physical distancing, and environmental cleaning and disinfection.
- » Implement screening testing of health care personnel even if they have been vaccinated.
- » Develop and implement health care personnel testing programs that include policies and procedures addressing the use of test results (i.e., explaining results to health care personnel, communicating information about positive cases to responsible parties, and how results will guide implementation of infection control measures).

SUPPORT

California Nurses Association (sponsor)

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