**To:** Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and Community Group Practice Providers

**From:** K. Aaron Geno, PhD, DABCC

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**Date:** December 17, 2024

**Re:** Holiday Impacts on Reference Laboratory Testing

**Situation**

The Christmas and New Year holidays impact shipping schedules and turnaround times for Mailout testing (testing performed at reference laboratories like Mayo Clinic Labs, ARUP, etc.). Altered shipping schedules also have impacts on sample stability that could necessitate recollections if not taken into account.

**Background**

Specimen stability is a significant concern around the holidays, particularly when falling mid-week as Christmas Day and New Year’s Day do this year. The Mailouts section does not ship on DHMC holidays, including Christmas Day and New Year’s Day. Shipments the day prior to a holiday depend upon each receiving laboratory’s schedule. Reference laboratories vary in their acceptance of shipments on holidays – these policies are not within the control of DHMC or the Mailouts section.

**Assessment**

The timing of sample collection along with shipping and receipt schedules will impact the times between collection and shipment, sometimes dramatically.

Example: A sample received on Monday, December 23, after the shipping cutoff destined for a laboratory not receiving samples on Christmas Day (Wednesday) will be held for shipment until Thursday and arrive at the testing laboratory on Friday.

Specimens with exceedingly short stability (e.g., flow cytometry studies not performed in-house) are likely to be adversely affected by these schedules, necessitating sample recollection. Specimen stability is dictated by the testing laboratory; DHMC has no influence over these limits.

**Recommendation**

Providers should consider sample stability for reference laboratory testing to avoid need for patient recollections. Providers should likewise expect longer than usual turnaround times for reference laboratory testing. Please direct inquiries on sample stability to the Mailouts section at 5-8093 or page 8139.

If testing is needed urgently for short-stability testing, providers are encouraged to contact the Mailouts section at 5-8093 or page 8139 to determine optimal sample timing.

**For questions or additional information, please contact:**

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