

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Media Contact

Maegan Bosak, SEARHC Marketing Director, [maeganb@searhc.org](mailto:maeganb@searhc.org), 907.966.8942

### SEARHC Announces End Dates for Free Asymptomatic Testing Program

**JUNEAU, November 17, 2020** – On Monday, November 16, the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) began to prioritize symptomatic COVID-19 testing in the community of Juneau and will discontinue the free, asymptomatic testing program Consortium-wide on December 19. In response to the surge of positive cases within the state and region, the change in protocols will allow facilities to preserve testing supplies and increase the turnaround time for test results. Free, asymptomatic testing ended in Sitka on November 2.

Testing will be prioritized for those showing symptoms of COVID-19, or those who have been in close contact with a positive case. Patients seeking asymptomatic testing must cover testing fees out-of-pocket at the time of testing. In addition, patients requesting asymptomatic testing are required to schedule an appointment by calling their local SEARHC clinic.

“SEARHC was able to administer thousands of tests to asymptomatic patients thanks to an Indian Health Services grant,” said Dr. Elliot Bruhl, Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer. “Due to the demand for testing, grant funds have been depleted. By prioritizing symptomatic patients, we will be able to ensure those who must have a test have access to them. We encourage all patients to continue utilizing free, asymptomatic testing clinics in participating communities until the program sunsets.”

In addition to the closure of free, asymptomatic testing in Juneau and Sitka, COVID testing hours have been reduced in the communities of Haines, Wrangell, and Klawock. Haines and Wrangell moved to Saturday-only clinics, while Klawock is moving to Saturday-only with reduced hours of 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. For up-to-date testing locations and hours, please visit [searhc.org/covid-19-testing](http://searhc.org/covid-19-testing).

COVID-19 tests are available to all who meet the symptomatic guidelines – including fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, or diarrhea. If you have insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid, you must provide this information when scheduling, and SEARHC will bill your insurance. You will not have any out-of-pocket charges for symptomatic or close contact testing. Symptomatic COVID-19 tests are by referral only for community members who meet testing criteria.

If you feel ill or are experiencing symptoms, call your healthcare provider or the COVID-19 Hotline at 907.966.8799. For more COVID-19 resources and information, visit [covid19.searhc.org](http://covid19.searhc.org).

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