NOTE: this version corrects the lab name, which was inaccurate in the original version. Northwest Labs is accurate.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rapid Testing for High Priority Populations now available
from Whatcom County Health Department

BELLINGHAM, WA - Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) is now operating a drive-through COVID-19 testing site for high priority populations in a partnership with Northwest Labs. WCHD's rapid testing team is responding to high priority testing needs with on-site testing at congregate living facilities for high-risk adults.

"By creating these opportunities for priority population testing, the Health Department aims to free up capacity at other medical provider or clinical agency testing locations for the public," said Cindy Hollinsworth, Communicable Disease and Epidemiology manager at WCHD.

Testing at the WCHD drive-through site is only available by referral from a healthcare provider once the provider has determined an individual should be tested. Healthcare providers must order the tests from the WCHD directly; patients cannot request testing themselves.

High priority populations for testing by WCHD include people with symptoms of COVID-19 who:

- work in healthcare or public safety sectors;
- live or work in an institutional or congregate living setting;
- are employed in essential services, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, public utilities, etc.; and,
- are at risk for severe illness (people over 60, people with underlying health conditions, and people who are pregnant).

Results from specimens collected through the WCHD drive-through site and rapid on-site response are anticipated to be provided within 24 hours of shipment to the lab.

Whatcom County Health Department has worked diligently to support this increased testing capacity, and will continue to explore avenues for increased testing.

Photo by John Meloy

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