



**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN THE NEBRASKA HEALTHCARE FACILITIES AND THE  
NEBRASKA PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

It is unlikely, but possible that a patient could present at a local hospital emergency department or urgent care setting for assessment of a potential highly infectious pathogen. All Nebraska healthcare facilities play an important role and need to be prepared to ask the travel and exposure history, recognize signs and symptoms of highly infectious diseases, identify patients as PUIs, immediately isolate, and inform local and state health departments. While the focus will be on preparedness for Ebola, it is important that preparedness for other novel, highly hazardous pathogenic diseases such as Crimean-Congo, Guanarito, Junin, Lassa, Lujo, Marburg, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) or highly pathogenic avian influenza will also be enhanced through these activities. Health care worker safety is best achieved through a deep understanding and correct implementation of infection control, appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), continuous training, demonstration of competencies, and participation in frequent exercises<sup>1</sup>. CDC released an *Interim Guidance for U.S. Hospital Preparedness for patients under investigation (PUI): A Framework for a Tiered Approach*, outlining different roles health care facilities can play. These roles include serving as treatment centers, assessment hospitals, and frontline health care facilities.

Many factors come into play when considering how to handle a patient with a potential high-consequence pathogen or when to collect and transport specimens for laboratory testing. Decisions are based on the stage of patient's symptoms, date of onset, capacity and capability of the facility, capability of facility laboratory to transport specimens to NPHL or perform other in-house laboratory testing. Such determinations will be made with the assistance of the State and/or Local Public Health Department when initial contact is made. Specimen Collection may be required in the frontline sites, as well as the assessment hospitals. *Laboratory guidelines for Collection, Testing and Transport of Specimens from PUI for Highly Hazardous Communicable Pathogens in Nebraska* describes the decision-making process involved with collecting and transporting specimens to NPHL.

**PLANNING FUNDAMENTALS:**

In an event resulting from a highly infectious substance, specimen collection would be essential in providing confirmation of the etiological

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of the MOA is to provide support to the healthcare facility when specimen transport is needed during an investigation of a patient suspicious of a highly infectious pathogen.

**STAKEHOLDERS RESPONSIBILITIES:**

**1. NEBRASKA PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY:**

- Develop a plan and provide all necessary supplies to transport patient specimens to NPHL. A transport cooler has been provided to include but not limited to: UN2814 Infectious Substances packaging systems, Coolers with gel-packs, Packaging Instructions, Red Secure Cable Ties, Chain of Custody.
- Have worked in conjunction with the DHHS Coordinator to have supplies and equipment delivered to possible frontline and assessment sites.
- Have determined procedure for labeling specimens and packaging/transporting safely.
- Will work in conjunction with the DHHS to arrange how and by whom the specimens will be transported to the NPHL.
- Have provided all necessary documentation forms.

**2. NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES:**

- Has provide funding for transport kits which have been placed at each front-line and assessment facility in Nebraska.
- Working with the state epidemiologist and local physicians, will coordinate most appropriate specimens to be collected for testing at NPHL.
- Will work in conjunction with the NPHL to approve how and by whom the specimens will be transported to the NPHL.
- Will contact the NPHL upon first suspicious of possible testing required.

**3. NEBRASKA HEALTHCARE FRONTLINE FACILITIES**

- Maintain location to store transport kit within their facility.
- Incorporate updates when provided.
- Replace any lost or misplaced items included in the kit.
- Review training on annual basis.
- Participate in annual exercises or drills hosted by NPHL.

**AUTHORITY:**

The Nebraska Public Health Laboratory, in conjunction with the NeDHHS will review this memorandum of agreement on a bi-annual basis for any corrections or revisions.

**Approved:**

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Printed Name

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Title

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Facility Name

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Signature

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