

February 15, 2021

To: Laboratory facilities serving Iowa residents

Re: Reporting of serological tests for syphilis

Effective March 1, 2021, the Iowa Department of Public Health will require laboratories that perform non-treponemal serological tests for syphilis (i.e., RPR or VDRL) to report all test results (both reactive and non-reactive).

The syphilis testing reverse algorithm, in which reactive treponemal antibody testing is followed by non-treponemal testing (i.e., RPR or VDRL), is now commonplace. In the reverse algorithm, non-reactive non-treponemal tests may be suggestive of latent infection in previously untreated people with confirmed antibody results. For that reason, all values of non-treponemal tests are required to interpret the results of the complete algorithm to help assess proper diagnostic status and staging of a syphilis case. Accordingly, existing legal authority authorizes public, private, and hospital laboratories to report results from all tests (including reactive and nonreactive results) performed as part of the testing algorithm. *See* 641 IAC 1.4(1)(d) (laboratories are required to report cases of reportable diseases and results obtained in the examination of all specimens which yield evidence of or are reactive for sexually transmitted diseases); 641 IAC 1.7(1) (laboratories shall provide the department with all information necessary to conduct a reportable disease investigation, including all positive, pending, and negative test results).

Please ensure that your electronic laboratory reporting (ELR) rules are updated to send all RPR and VDRL results, reactive and non-reactive, to IDPH. Questions regarding this reporting requirement should be directed to George Walton, STD Program Manager, at George.Walton@idph.iowa.gov or 515-281-4936.

Thank you for your cooperation with these important reporting requirements.