

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT (KDHE) GUIDANCE ON RE-COLLECTION OF NEWBORN SCREENING SPECIMENS DURING COVID-19

FOR PHYSICIANS

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the re-collection of newborn screening specimens during the COVID-19 pandemic and reduce barriers for families and primary care physicians.

What is Newborn Screening?

Newborn screening is an essential public health service and is required for all infants born in the state. [Newborn screening in Kansas](#) includes testing for hearing loss, pulse oximetry screening for critical congenital heart defects, and a blood screening for 30 genetic/metabolic disorders (also known as the “heel stick”).

Upon completion of the screening process, laboratory results are provided to the primary care physician (PCP) to communicate with families. If a screen has been determined to be invalid or unsatisfactory, the screen must be repeated until a successful/complete screen is received. If a screen has been determined to be abnormal, the PCP will be notified of the values and will either assure a repeat screen is collected or make a referral to a specialist.

Who is Responsible for the Newborn Screen?

This crucial public health service requires collaboration among many stakeholders.

HOSPITALS/BIRTHING FACILITIES & MIDWIVES

- Timely collection of specimens
- Dependable transport of specimens to the screening laboratory

KDHE - LABORATORY AND FOLLOW-UP TEAMS

- Prompt processing and analysis of specimens
- Timely reporting of results to primary care physicians

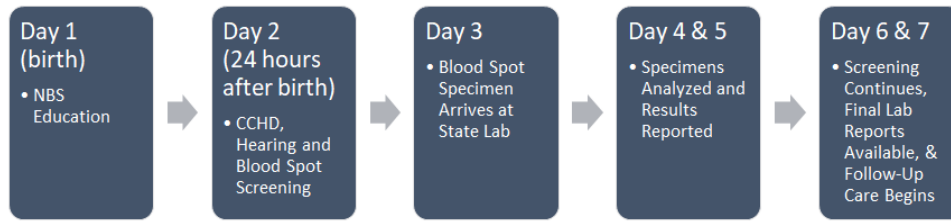
PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS

- Respond quickly to inform families
- Educate families on needed actions
- Assure recollection of specimen or referral to subspecialty physicians
- Adhere to agency follow-up guidelines

FAMILIES

- Prompt action following notification from your doctor that a repeat screen is needed

Per [Kansas Administrative Regulation \(K.A.R.\) 28-4-502](#), the responsibility of obtaining the initial specimen is on the birthing facility or birth attendant on record. Repeat screenings are the responsibility of the PCP. As a reminder, the newborn screening process is as follows:



Why is this Important During COVID-19?

The following concerns have been reported by physicians regarding the ability to complete the repeat screen during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Families do not want to return to the hospital/birthing facility to get specimens collected
- Many PCP offices do not currently collect repeat NBS specimens during well-baby checks
- PCP's that want to assist with collecting the repeat screen may not have the resources (materials, training, or staffing)
- While newborn screening is an essential health service, some hospitals/birthing facilities have been practicing social distancing and turning away "non-essential patients"
- Some outpatient laboratories may still be closed based upon county guidance

KDHE Guidance

The Kansas Newborn Screening Program is issuing the following guidance on the collection and re-collection of newborn screening specimens.

- Collection of the specimen and discharge prior to 24 hours of age is not recommended as the screen will be considered invalid if collected prior to 24 hours after birth. If immediate discharge is necessary, the first screen should be completed before discharge and the family should be informed they will be required to return for an outpatient screen.
- Hospitals/birthing facilities and PCPs should stress the importance of the screen and encourage families to stay in the birthing facility until just after the 24-hour timeframe to allow for the proper collections.
- Communication with families is the most important tool for alleviating concerns about follow-up care. Remind families that obtaining necessary health care services, such as those related to delivery/birth and well child visits is permitted and encouraged in the [Kansas Ad Astra Reopening Guidance](#).

The Kansas Newborn Screening Program recommends the following options for completing repeat newborn screenings:

Maintain normal referral protocols for your practice. Continue referring families to the hospital/birthing facility or other outpatient lab your office typically refers to. Stay in regular communication with these facilities about special accommodations or practices they have implemented to reduce family/infant exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic. Clearly

communicate this information to families to help reduce their fears and anxiety about completing a repeat screening at these facilities.

Collect the repeat NBS specimen. If families are concerned about returning to the hospital/birthing facility or another outpatient laboratory, the Kansas Newborn Screening Program recommends collecting the repeat screen in-office during the one to two-week infant visit. To collect dried blood spot (DBS) specimens, follow the steps below:

1. Complete the [Laboratory Report Delivery form](#) to ensure that final reports are correctly delivered.
2. Request DBS collection kits from the Kansas Health and Environmental Laboratory with the [Supply Requisition form](#).
3. Review the following collection technique training materials or attend a collection technique training Webinar.
 - a. [Kansas Newborn Screening Physician Toolkit](#)
 - b. [Kansas Health & Environment Laboratory's DBS Collection Instructions](#)
 - c. For live webinar training, contact Kinsey Anderson, the Education and Outreach Coordinator, at kinsey.anderson@ks.gov.

There are several facility practices that can help families feel safe during COVID-19, including:

- Use scheduled appointments as opposed to walk-ins and have families wait in their car until the appointment time
- Ask patients to complete the demographic, insurance, and other information via phone or online before the appointment
- Perform after-hour laboratory draws for newborns
- Establish certain days or blocks of time dedicated to newborns
- Designate specific personnel who have not had direct contact with COVID-19 positive/confirmed patients to complete newborn screens
- Designate specific rooms, wings, or spaces as “clean” zones, that remain free from COVID-19 exposure for the collection of newborn screens

Additional Resources

KDHE has previously issued COVID-19 preparedness and precautions guidance for facilities and pregnant and perinatal populations. These resources are available on the [COVID-19 Resource Center](#) at <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/> and through the links below.

- [KAAP Messaging Toolkit for Pediatricians](#)
- [KAAP COVID-19 Pediatric Clinic Key Strategies](#)
- [FAQ's for Moms to be and Infants during COVID-19](#)
- [Getting the clinic ready for handling COVID-19 patients](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control](#)
- [Cleaning Guidance](#)