# Ten Tips for Planning a COVID-19 Mobile Testing Center

*The following guide is intended to provide local officials with guidance about planning a COVID-19 mobile testing center ("MTC").[1] This resource was created with input from public health professionals, civil engineers, and urban planners. This guide is NOT intended to replace guidance provided by the CDC, WHO, state health departments, public health institutions, state and local law enforcement, or other reputable sources.*

1.  **Make decisions based on information, data, and recommendations from reputable sources.** As a society, we are experiencing a period of unprecedented stress and uncertainty. In times like this, local officials must make decisions based on information, data, and recommendations from reputable sources such as: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), FEMA, and state health departments. Access to accurate information can save lives and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on communities.

2.  **Distribute clear, accurate, and timely information.** Local officials should communicate information from reliable resources, stay informed, and take action to prevent the spread of rumors and misinformation. Local officials should utilize a variety of internal and public-facing communication channels (e.g., all-staff notifications, flyers, text alerts, social media, local news channels, etc.) to provide residents accurate and timely information about prevention measures, early warning signs, risks, and any assistance that is available. Mobile Testing Centers ("MTCs") provide a great venue for distributing reliable information to a key target audience (i.e., people who are infected or are concerned that they might be infected) and should therefore be equipped with information resources.[2]

3.  **Provide clear and accurate information to people before, during, and after testing.** Before. Provide people guidance regarding any identification needed, doctors' orders or referrals, insurance, pre-screening, or other requirements; appointment times; hours of operation; and, step-by-step instructions for the testing process. This information should be distributed through all available channels and translated into multiple languages, if necessary. During. Install wayfinding and informational signage (e.g., traffic message boards, static signs, directional arrows) that provide people with step-by-step instructions about the testing process. After. Prepare a print hand-out about the next steps for receiving results, what to do if a test is positive, and references to reputable information sources.

4.  **Activate your local pre-disaster and hazard mitigation plans and protocols.** Communities should have pre-disaster or hazard mitigation plans as well as protocols for mobilizing Emergency Operation Centers ("EOC") or other similar command-and-control centers. Local officials should activate any plans or protocols that were developed for events like the COVID-19 pandemic. If possible, the planning and operations of MTCs should be coordinated through EOCs or other similar operations centers.

5.  **Site testing centers in locations that can accommodate long lines of cars.** Health officials are anticipating a high demand for mobile testing centers as testing becomes more widely available.[3] While pre-arranged appointment times will help spread out screenings, those involved with planning and deploying MTCs should anticipate and plan for long lines of cars. MTCs should be sited in open areas (e.g., large parking lots) where vehicle lines will not disrupt local traffic patterns or create other safety hazards. Other things to consider may include rest rooms (e.g., outdoor temporary restrooms with hand washing stations), estimated wait-time signage, pre-testing registration, and practical methods for distributing useful information for drivers that are waiting in lines (See Tips #2 and 3).

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[1] Mobile Testing Centers ("MTC") are sometimes referred to also "mobile testing sites," "drive-thru testing centers" or "sites"
[2] Information resources, such as flyers, brochures, and other materials, should be written to educate residents rather than alarm them.
[3] https://www.npr.org/2020/03/17/817354387/drive-through-coronavirus-tests-begin-to-pop-up-around-the-united-states

6. **Make Mobile Testing Centers accessible for pedestrians, the homeless, and people with disabilities.** Not all people have access to a personal vehicle or the ability to access a MTC. While most people will likely access MTCs by car, centers should be accessible and designed for people who choose to (or must) walk or bike to the site. Clear directions should be provided for people arriving by different modes (e.g., vehicle, walk-ups, biking). Special care should be taken to avoid que jumping, crowding, and people abandoning their vehicles. Communities should also develop and implement plans to reach at-risk (e.g., homeless, elderly, people with disabilities) populations that may not be able to access MTCs. [4]

7. **Implement measures to reduce the risk of exposure and transmission.** Open air testing environments reduce the risk of exposure and transmission due to improved airflow and by enabling better social distancing practices.[5] Local officials should coordinate with local health institutions and law enforcement on matters regarding the layout, design, and operations of MTCs to ensure the safety of all people involved. This also includes the provision of personal protective equipment ("PPE") for healthcare providers.

8. **Implement measures to ensure the physical safety of health care providers and patients.** MTCs should be planned and arranged to ensure the physical safety of the health care providers who are putting their bodies at physical risk when performing tests. This can be accomplished by using traffic calming measures such as speed tables, speed bumps, chicanes, bollards, signage, and other measures. Weather protection for health care providers (e.g., tents, space heaters, fans) will also be critical.

9. **Coordinate closely with local law enforcement and secure additional resources, as needed.** Coordinate with state and local law enforcement on the planning and operations of MTCs. Law enforcement may be needed to support traffic control, crowd management, and other measures that ensure the safety of health care providers and people seeking testing. In some places, the National Guard has been engaged to assist local officials with the following: disinfecting public spaces; distributing food; assisting with transportation and logistical support of health officials; coordinating with state and local health and emergency managers; managing medical supply logistics; planning; and staffing support. Municipalities should work through their state health departments and Governor's office to engage the National Guard, if needed.

10. **Communicate and coordinate with area hospitals, community-based organizations, and others.** Local officials should communicate and coordinate their COVID-19 response—including the planning and operations of MTCs—with area hospitals, community-based organizations ("CBOs"), faith-based organizations ("FBOs") and other local organizations and institutions. In addition to other resources, these organizations and institutions can provide access to broad social networks and social infrastructure systems through which to distribute information and resources. They can also assist in reaching hard-to-reach and at-risk populations.

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[4] Local officials should develop a plan to screen and/or provide test kits to people who do not have the ability to access MTCs (e.g., homeless, elderly, homebound populations, people with disabilities). Mobile health care units, in-home health care services, and outreach programs, such as the Night Ministry, can potentially be an effective method for conducting COVID-19 screenings for at-risk populations.
[5] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html