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Report Highlights

Integrity of Data Reported on the COVID-19 Dashboard

Louisiana Department of Health – Office of Public Health

Audit Control # 82200006

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Why We Conducted This Audit

We evaluated the integrity of the data the Office of Public Health (OPH) reported on its COVID-19 dashboard (dashboard) as of October 1, 2020. Although we have conducted limited work on potential duplicate cases in the COVID-19 data in the past, we conducted this audit as part of a national initiative involving auditors from other states to evaluate the quality of COVID-19 data. In addition, we received multiple legislative and public requests to evaluate this data.

What We Found

Overall, we found that while OPH has processes to ensure data on the number of positive cases and deaths is not over-reported on its dashboard, laboratories did not always submit all COVID-19 test results to OPH, and the results they did submit were not always submitted timely. As a result, the positivity rate on any given date may have been higher or lower than what OPH reported on its dashboard for that date. The reliability of the positivity rate is important since it is one of the factors that drives decision-making during the pandemic for requirements such as mask mandates, business closing and reopening plans, and nursing home visitation.

- **Laboratories did not submit complete COVID-19 test results to OPH. The lack of complete test data could affect the reliability of the positivity rate and the state's ability to make informed decisions during the pandemic.** We identified COVID-19 tests that were billed to Medicaid but not included in the testing data, COVID-19 tests that were performed on a routine basis for organizations such as the National Football League but not included in the testing data, and laboratories that reported only positive test results or only negative test results. In addition, COVID-19 tests that were submitted by laboratories to OPH did not include all information required by HHS.
- **Laboratories did not submit all required COVID-19 test results to OPH within 24 hours, as required by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and state regulations. Untimely test results make it difficult for OPH to perform effective contact tracing and affects the state's ability to make informed decisions based on the positivity rate.** We found that it took laboratories more than five days to submit 19.4% of positive COVID-19 tests to OPH once the test result was known. According to OPH, the timeliness of the reporting of test results has improved over time.

View the full report, including management's response, at www.la.gov.