



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Office of the Surgeon General
Washington, D.C. 20201

April 9, 2020

Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH
Executive Director
Harris County Public Health
2223 West Loop South
Houston, TX 77027

Dr. Shah:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Community-Based Testing Sites (CBTS) in Houston and Harris County, Texas. Let me assure you that the Department of Health and Human Services and the Federal Emergency Management Agency share your sense of urgency in response to supporting community testing for COVID-19.

We have extended the transition period for the four federally supported CBTS locations in Houston and Harris County, Texas through May 30, 2020.

Additionally, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently approved the nasal self-swab method for use in testing patients for the novel coronavirus. This testing method is less invasive and is safer for both patients and healthcare providers. The federally supported CBTS will transition to the self-swabbing technique this week. This process will improve the safety of individuals on site by reducing personal contact, consumption of PPE and biohazardous waste.

Thank you for the opportunity to address your concerns. If we may provide any additional information about the federally supported CBTS program, please reach out to Darcie Johnston at Darcie.Johnston@hhs.gov.

Sincerely,

RADM Erica Schwartz, MD, JD, MPH
Deputy Surgeon General
Office of the Surgeon General
United States Public Health Service