

County health doctor reports COVID-19 testing agreement with Humboldt, UIHS

August 26, 2020



State officials have approved a plan to allow Del Norte and Humboldt counties to combine efforts with United Indian Health Services to speed up processing COVID-19 tests.

Dr. Warren Rehwaldt, Del Norte's health officer, updated the county's Board of Supervisors about testing on Aug. 25. He said that while the state has brought in extra testing equipment free of charge, the closest lab in Humboldt County has been cramped for space.

UIHS has a moderate-complexity lab at its Potawot Health Village in Arcata. Rehwaldt said this lab is able to perform in-house polymerase chain reaction testing, which can determine if someone is positive for the novel coronavirus. He said this is in addition to the antibody testing they offer to essential workers, which helps them determine if they had been positive for COVID-19.

Because UIHS services clients in both counties, they offered to partner with both Humboldt and Del Norte, allowing greater testing capacity, Rehwaldt said.

“We jumped at the chance,” he said of the UIHS offer. He said testing locally will save time and effort of shipping samples out to labs as far as the other end of the state. “They’ve really stepped up to improve their lab service and partnering with them allows both counties to improve lab service across the board,” Rehwaldt said.

“This solution, partnering two counties and United Indian Health Services, improves access for all residents of both counties and it improves services for tribes within the counties,” he said. “It’s a win-win scenario.”