



**The Building and Construction Trades Welfare Foundation-Mayo Clinic Laboratories  
COVID-19 RESILIENCE PROJECT**

**Participant Summary and Frequently Asked Questions  
May 1, 2021**

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead*

**Welcome!!**

We are excited to invite you to participate in an antibody Project that will provide you with important health information – as well as allow you to be part of a national effort powered by the force of unionized building and construction trade participants working with the world-renowned Mayo Clinic to gather information that will assist in further understanding and containing this virus. The Project is designed to analyze vital information to help determine the presence and persistence (i.e., if they last and grow stronger) of positive antibodies in the fight against COVID-19. Knowledge is power!

The goal is to test thousands of individuals of all ages who are eligible participants in certain multiemployer welfare funds. This is an enormous and ambitious undertaking, but you and your brothers and sisters are in a unique position to support this project due to the very nature of organized labor. With your support and cooperation, we can get this done and be proud to be part of the solution!

Please take time to read this Participant Summary and Frequently Asked Questions.

**BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

- Initial participants: Building and construction trade eligible participants in multiemployer funds that have chosen to participate in Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, and Indiana. You may participate whether you have or have not had a vaccination. As noted below, in most areas, there are two types of tests offered:
  - A finger prick test designed to determine whether you have antibodies in response to a natural infection – in other words, you were infected by the COVID-19 virus, even if you were not aware.
  - A venipuncture test designed to determine whether you have antibodies in response to a natural infection OR in response to a vaccine.

- Project Partners:
  - Mayo Clinic: Laboratory, logistical, and scientific support
  - Oracle Corporation (Information Technology support)
  - ALTN Corp: Specimen collection
- Should you agree to participate, you will register for the program on Sign Up Genius (a link will be provided). You will be asked to provide basic information about yourself.
- You will then receive an email from the Oracle COVID-19 Patient Monitoring System (Oracle) to register on the Oracle website, where you will provide basic information about your general health, your potential exposure to SARS-CoV-2, and a few other questions to help us understand your relative risk of developing COVID-19. After registering, you will receive an email from Oracle confirming your data (name, etc.).
- You may also register your eligible spouse and children (at least 5 years of age) should they choose to participate.
- You will also be asked to participate in a brief Oracle daily survey to help determine if you are developing symptoms consistent with COVID-19. This daily survey is optional, but you are strongly encouraged to participate – again, the more information provided to our Project Partners, the better! Should the survey detect suspicious symptoms, you will automatically receive a notification to contact a healthcare provider for further evaluation.
- As to testing, depending upon location and availability, you will have the option to either donate a few drops of blood by way of a finger prick, which will be placed on a special card (Blood Spot Test), or to have a blood draw (also known as a “venipuncture”). Details of this testing, i.e., type of test, where, and when, will be provided when you enroll. The Blood Spot Test and the blood draws will be sent to Mayo Clinic Laboratories for analysis. These tests are designed to determine if you likely have developed “antibodies” to SARS-CoV-2.
- If your initial test is negative, you will not have another test. However, even if your initial test is negative, we will request that you continue to report COVID symptoms in response to the daily Oracle email. You may be eligible for other testing as the Project progresses.
- If your initial test is positive, you will be asked to have another blood test in 4 months to see if your protective antibodies have remained stable or declined. The current intention is to continue testing positive participants every 4 months for the first 12 months of the Project to help determine if their antibody levels remain stable (i.e., if they continue to maintain presumed protection from the virus.)
- **The follow up tests are key to the Project, so please be prepared to commit to these follow up tests if you are asked to do so.**

- You will receive an email from Oracle when the above results are available, approximately 7-10 days after testing.
- When your test results are ready, you will receive an email from Oracle with a link to your test results. You will continue to receive these emails until you have checked your results. You are encouraged to download and save your results, as the link will expire three days after you have checked your results and then you will have to contact [BCTWF@mayo.edu](mailto:BCTWF@mayo.edu).

The data once de-identified will be evaluated for purposes of this Project. De-identified means your privacy is protected. As part of a national effort to combat this virus, de-identified information in the Oracle Patient Monitoring System, including the de-identified information gathered as part of this Project, will be shared with the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to accomplish essential public health goals. According to HHS, entry of patient information into this Oracle system is fully compliant with HIPAA.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **1. What is COVID-19 and why is it relevant to me?**

- COVID-19 is disease caused by a novel “corona” virus (SARS-CoV-2). It is remarkable for its ease of transmission, and its wide-ranging, harmful effects, and is causing the most devastating public health crisis in a century.
- A February 20, 2021, report from the Kaiser Family Foundation stated COVID-19 has become the number one cause of death in the United States. Its fatality rate is much higher in individuals with significant pre-existing health issues.
- It is true that most survive and recover fully from COVID-19, but there are survivors who are being called “long-haulers” whose symptoms persist. Further, the virus can damage the lungs, heart, and brain leading to other health concerns long-term.
- Young individuals now make up the largest demographic being harmed by the disease, unlike earlier phases of the pandemic, in which elderly individuals were more significantly impacted.

### **2. Are there effective treatments for COVID-19?**

Overall care has been improved for patients with COVID-19, and the range of medical therapies to treat this is growing and evolving rapidly, including both drugs approved by U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and drugs made available under FDA emergency use authorization (EUA). However, although aggressive combination therapy has somewhat reduced the risk of dying from COVID-19 (studies vary in how much this risk has declined), *there remains no known cure for this disease.*

### **3. Vaccines are being rolled out, so why should I get tested for antibodies? Doesn't that mean the disease will go away soon?**

Tremendous progress has been made with respect to the development of vaccines and distribution, although not as quick and efficient as everyone would like, is underway. Note, however:

- Vaccine “effectiveness” specifically means that the drug has been shown to reduce the symptoms of COVID-19. To date, *no vaccine has yet been definitively shown to either prevent infection with SARS-CoV-2 or to prevent transmission of the virus.* Furthermore, we really have little information about how long any of the new vaccines continue to be effective after initial immunization.
- *At least 25 percent of Americans have stated that if even if a vaccine were available to them at no cost, they would not get such a vaccine.*
- It is likely that a combination of vaccination and direct COVID exposure will be required for us to ultimately achieve population (“herd”) immunity to the virus.
- **Thus, a Project focusing on the presence and persistence of antibodies in the general population, i.e., if the antibodies last and grow stronger, is of vital importance.**
- On an individual level, your testing will provide you with important health information as to whether you may have potentially protective antibodies.

**4. If I have had the COVID vaccine, can I still participate?**

Yes, we encourage you to participate if you have already had the COVID-19 vaccine. As noted above, in most areas, there are two types of tests offered:

- A finger prick test designed to determine whether you have antibodies in response to a natural infection – in other words, you were infected by the COVID-19 virus, even if you were not aware.
- A venipuncture test designed to determine whether you have antibodies in response to a natural infection OR in response to a vaccine.

**5. If I choose to participate, will my results be kept confidential?**

All individual data that will be used for analyses will be kept strictly confidential. Oracle has developed a collaborative relationship with the CDC to help monitor COVID-19 symptoms around the country. Your symptom data will be shared with groups such as the CDC and HHS, but only in de-identified form - which is to say, without any of your personal information. None of your test results will be made available to any outside agency, and the Project will only develop analyses that have been “scrubbed” of individually identifiable data.

**6. How will my test results be provided to me?**

You will receive an email from Oracle when the results are available, approximately 7-10 days after testing.

**7. If I do not want to receive the Oracle daily emails or participate in providing information regarding my health status on a regular basis, will I still be notified of test results?**

We strongly encourage all participants to interact with the program through the Oracle daily emails. This is not only the most efficient way to communicate and track symptoms,

but it is also the best way for participants to receive important information about COVID related updates or new possible opportunities (such as the ability to have antibody testing when they do ultimately receive a vaccine). That stated, if a participant chooses to opt out of the daily updates, they will still be notified of their test results.

**8. Why are individuals with positive antibody tests being asked to have repeat blood draws several months later?**

Whether COVID protective antibodies persist, and specifically how long they linger in the body, is not fully understood. In order for us as individuals and a society to prepare adequate protections for this disease, it is essential that we know how long such antibodies persists, and whether their persistence is dependent on factors such as age or medical history. Repeat testing is essential to obtain this information.

**9. What can I do to help prevent developing COVID-19?**

Masks, social distancing, hand washing, symptom tracking, contact tracing, isolation of positives and associated methods have all been shown to reduce the risk of disease transmission. Of these, masks and social distancing are of paramount importance.

**10. Why is this particular Resilience Project important?**

By testing participants and eligible dependents in multiple states, the Resilience Project is testing a unique multi-generational group over a large geographic area, which means it is largely representative of the general population.

- In unvaccinated patients, there have been few updated analyses of such groups, which makes it difficult to assess the true risk of COVID-19 exposure and possible infection in different areas of the country.
- In vaccinated patients, existing analyses have been conducted in selected populations of individuals, who typically represent younger, healthier populations who have been administered a single, specific vaccine. In summary, to date, few if any large scale studies have examined the positivity rate in groups that are representative of the general population.
- Although other investigators affiliated with various national groups such as the pharmaceutical industry, the CDC, and Universities are conducting COVID-19 antibody tests, few studies to date have had the ability to examine representative populations such as the building trades coalition represented here.
- Thus, compiling data from the population represented by the Resilience Project, it is hoped, will yield vital and more relevant information about the spread and prevention of COVID-19.

Please see the attached Appendix for more specific information about COVID-19 Testing.

**This is a summary of information provided for informational purposes. It is not intended to be specific medical advice.**

## Appendix - COVID-19 Testing

- There are two types of tests available for COVID-19: viral tests and antibody tests.
- Viral tests look for the presence of actual virus or portions of the virus. These are currently considered *the best test to determine if someone has an active COVID-19 infection*. Viral tests are generally of two types:
  - Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) or Nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT): This type of testing, also called molecular or viral testing, is done by swabbing the nose or mouth or collecting saliva. The test detects a part of the virus's genetic material. It is currently considered the best test to determine if someone was recently infected with the virus.
  - Antigen tests: These tests are done by swabbing the nose. Instead of detecting the virus' genetic material, they detect a protein on the virus.
- Antibody tests (also known as “serology testing”) are performed using a sample of blood and detect antibodies produced as a result of the body trying to fight off the virus.
- Antibodies are blood proteins produced in response to, and counteracting, substances which the body recognizes as alien, such as bacteria, viruses, and other foreign materials. They are generally seen as evidence of the body's efforts to fight off an infection.
- Tests used in this Project:
  - Antibody screening by Blood Spot Test will be performed using the Luminex Corporation SARS-CoV-2 Multi-Antigen IgG Assay.
  - Antibody screening by a blood draw (venipuncture) will be performed using the COVSQ, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), Spike Antibody, Semi-Quantitative, Serum

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