Coronavirus: Berkeley opens COVID-19 testing site for ‘vulnerable’ population

By EVAN WEBECK | Bay Area News Group | April 08, 2020

First responders, those without access to healthcare are eligible to be tested

Those without healthcare and essential city employees in Berkeley now have one more option to get tested for COVID-19.

The city has partnered with LifeLong Medical and UC Berkeley to open a coronavirus testing site for its “vulnerable community members,” health officer Dr. Lisa Hernandez announced Tuesday.

“Testing vulnerable people in Berkeley and our first responders can prevent spread among high-risk groups,” Hernandez said in a statement, “as well as those essential City employees who must be in contact with people infected with COVID-19 and the general public.”

It will be open to firefighters, nurses, police officers and “other essential city employees,” as well as anyone who does not have a healthcare provider. To make an appointment, call LifeLong Medical at 510-981-4100.

The city did not say how many test kits it has, or how many will be able to be conducted at the site each day. A lab at UC Berkeley opened last week with the ability to process more than 1,000 tests per day.

“This testing site as well as one that started this week at UC Berkeley will help build up our data,” Hernandez said, “which is crucial information that fuels another part of our work: developing scientific models to determine how and when cases may increase and how to prepare for those outcomes.”

There have been 32 cases of COVID-19 confirmed in the city of Berkeley — the total in Alameda County, 634 as of Tuesday, is the second-most in the Bay Area —but those represent “just a fraction of the actual picture,” Hernandez said, due to testing shortfalls.

A testing site opened at a Hayward Fire Station two weeks ago and on Tuesday reported its 2,000th result. Of the first 2,089 people to be tested, 226 were found positive, a 10.8% rate of positive tests.

The state began to clear its testing backlog this week and has now received results from 143,000 of the 157,000 tests it has conducted. The approximately 14,000 pending tests are still the most of any state that reports such data.

To read the original article: https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/04/08/coronavirus-berkeley-opens-covid-19-testing-site-for-vulnerable-population/