



**Week: 12<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**Big Idea of the Week:**

Testing helps stop the spread and saves lives

The Government COVID-19 Response is asking community members to get tested for coronavirus to help find people who are carrying the virus.

If one person has the virus and spreads it to others, and then each of those people spreads it to others, within a short time, the virus can spread throughout a community.

Many people who have the virus still feel fine so they can spread the virus to others without knowing it. Others can feel signs and symptoms but they are not too serious so they do not stay home.

Some people, however, can get very sick and even die, especially people who are older or have other health conditions.

The only way to know if a person has coronavirus is to get tested.

Testing to know who has the virus helps those with the virus get the care they need to stay healthy and survive, and stop the spread to their family and community.

By volunteering to testing, you are being a role-model in your community, someone who will inspire and motivate others not to fear testing either.

By volunteering to be tested, you are protecting yourself, your family, and your community.

By volunteering to be tested, you are saving lives.

If you would like to get tested to know your status, walk-in testing is available at Special Court in Freetown.

#### **Suggestions for people to interview**

- District Surveillance Officer
- District Psychosocial Lead
- District Risk Communication Lead
- District Social Mobilization Manager
- Community Care Center Representative
- Community leaders
- Religious leaders

#### **Suggestions for questions for interviews and panel discussions**

- Why should I get tested?
- What are the benefits to getting tested?
- What does testing have to do with bringing an end to coronavirus in Sierra Leone?

- Should I get tested even if I have no symptoms?
- How can I get tested?

### What is it?

The National COVID-19 Emergency Response Centre (NACOVERC)'s Surveillance Pillar is embarking on an enhanced surveillance surge, or **'active case search'** which will last for ten weeks. 'Active case search' means that instead of just testing those who report coronavirus symptoms, and primary contacts of confirmed coronavirus cases, surveillance teams will actively go and search for other cases that might be in the community. This means testing people who do not necessarily have any coronavirus symptoms, and who do not have any known links to confirmed coronavirus cases.

### How will the active case search work?

The active case search will start in Western Area Urban and Rural as this is where the majority of coronavirus cases are (61.5% of all coronavirus cases are in Western Area Urban or Rural), and then move out to the other districts within the ten weeks. Individuals will be invited to be tested for coronavirus. Testing will be done on a voluntary basis. No one can be tested against their will. Test results will be available within 36 hours. If positive, people with signs and symptoms and people without signs and symptoms but who have certain existing health conditions will be taken to a hospital. People without signs and symptoms and who are otherwise healthy will be taken to Community Care Centers.

### Why is it necessary?

It is very likely that there are more coronavirus cases in Sierra Leone than the current figures suggest. There are many possible reasons for this:

- some people who have coronavirus might not have any symptoms and so might not realize they have it (these are called asymptomatic cases)
- some people might only have mild symptoms and think they are caused by something else
- some people might not know they should be reporting their symptoms
- some people might be hesitant or fearful to report, which can keep them from getting life-saving care and support

As long as there are cases in the community that are not separated and isolated from others, coronavirus will continue to spread amongst us.

### What does it matter if coronavirus continues to spread in Sierra Leone?

If infected with coronavirus, many of us will experience no or only mild symptoms and will recover without special treatment, but others will not be so lucky. Some people can get seriously sick from coronavirus and die. Older people, and people with other conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes are most at risk of getting seriously sick from coronavirus and dying. Some people with these conditions might not even know they have them. Even young and healthy people can get seriously sick and die from coronavirus. No one is risk-free.

The more coronavirus spreads to other people, the more at-risk our healthcare workers are. They are working in health centers and hospitals and so are most exposed to coronavirus. If healthcare workers become seriously sick and even die, not only is this a terrible loss for their families, friends, co-workers,

and communities, but it will make it difficult for hospitals to stay open and normal health services to run. This will affect all of us.

Finally, as long as there is coronavirus spread in Sierra Leone, there will need to be restrictions. These restrictions affect our education system, our livelihoods, our businesses, our economy. They affect all of us.