

Foreign domestic helpers waiting to join new employers' family may make appointment for free COVID-19 testing service from tomorrow

The Labour Department (LD) will commence registration tomorrow (August 24) for foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) whose previous employment contracts have expired or have been terminated and who are waiting to join the new employers' family to make an appointment for a COVID-19 testing service. The testing is voluntary and free of charge. Eligible FDHs are required to make a prior appointment by telephone and provide their specimens at a specific time slot at Harbour Road Sports Centre, the designated temporary specimen collection centre.

A LD spokesman said, "To reduce the health risks faced by FDHs staying in boarding facilities of employment agencies (EAs) and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the community, the Government launched a free, one-off COVID-19 testing service for the FDHs on August 9. In response to recent confirmed infection cases of FDHs who had stayed in boarding facilities, some of which were not operated by EAs, the Government decided to expand the scope of the testing service to cover FDHs whose previous employment contracts have expired or have been terminated and who are waiting to join the new employers' family. This group of FDHs are most likely to be staying in boarding facilities while waiting to change employers."

"We strongly encourage FDHs staying in boarding facilities to actively participate in the free test to safeguard their health. Participants will be notified of the test results via SMS in about two to three days after collection of specimen, and positive cases will be referred to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health for follow-up. If an FDH needs to stay in a boarding facility for an extended period of time while waiting to change employer, he/she may re-take the test as appropriate, especially before joining the new employer's family. We appeal for EAs' active assistance in helping FDHs register for and take the test at the specimen collection centre. We also advise employers to check that their new FDHs have a valid negative test result before joining the family. For FDHs who are currently under employment contracts and are residing with their employers, they are encouraged to join the Universal Community Testing Programme to be launched by the Government shortly on September 1."

The specimen collection centre is located at Harbour Road Sports Centre, 27 Harbour Road, Wan Chai. The centre will commence service on August 25, opening daily from 8.30am to 8pm, and will operate until September 30.

FDHs are eligible for the free combined nasal and throat swab testing service if their previous employment contracts have expired or have been terminated and they are waiting to join the new employers' family at the time

of making the appointment for the testing service. Eligible FDHs may dial the registration hotline 1836 133 starting from August 24, 9am to 9pm daily, to make an appointment for specimen collection on August 25 or later. Same-day appointment will not be offered by the registration hotline, and any request without prior appointment will not be accepted.

Duty officers of the telephone booking service centre will register the name, Hong Kong Identity Card number and/or passport number and mobile telephone number of the FDH. Duty officers will ask for simple information regarding the eligibility of the FDH for the testing service, e.g. reference number and limit of stay as shown on the latest visa issued by the Immigration Department (ImmD), or the reference number/date of application for a visa/extension of stay as a visitor as shown on documents issued by ImmD, etc. The FDH is advised to prepare the relevant documents beforehand for a smooth registration. Upon successful registration, an SMS to confirm the date, time and location to conduct the collection of specimen will be sent to the FDH.

Upon arrival at the specimen collection centre at the appointed time slot, the FDH will be asked to show their Hong Kong Identity Card, passport and the SMS appointment confirmation to verify their identity. He/she will be asked to sign a consent form to give consent to taking the test and confirm his/her eligibility for the testing service.

The testing agency will collect specimens from the specimen collection centre and deliver them to the laboratory for testing. Participants will be notified of the test results (irrespective of positive or negative) via SMS. The testing agency will not acquire or retain any personal information of the participants. The testing agency will inform LD of the serial number of the specimens with a positive test result and the relevant cases will be referred by LD to CHP for follow-up.

For enquiries, please contact LD by email at fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk.