



Disability
Rights
Oregon

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COVID-19 testing in Oregon remains insufficient, people with disabilities are at risk of being left behind

Portland, Oregon— Weeks without widespread testing of individuals for the COVID-19 virus may have jeopardized Oregonians with disabilities. The state’s leading statewide disability rights organization sounded a warning bell and demands answer from the Federal government. Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) called for federal agencies to share data on test distribution.

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) has received reports that people with disabilities are being denied or having tests delayed due to the lack of availability of tests to respond to the demand.

“To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Director-General the World Health Organization stated testing, isolation, and contact tracing approach is ‘the backbone of the response’ to COVID-19. Yet, Oregon’s testing capability is woefully inadequate,” said Jake Cornett, Executive Director of Disability Rights Oregon.

In a letter sent to federal officials, DRO, along with [Protection & Advocacy organizations](#) across the country, raised concerns about bias against people with disabilities in the distribution and administration of the tests. These organizations, charged with investigating abuse and neglect of people with disabilities, say transparency is necessary to prevent discrimination and investigate abuse and neglect against people with disabilities.

“The COVID-19 crisis is an especially serious challenge for people with disabilities. We’re more likely to have underlying health conditions, be isolated in our homes, and

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reliant on others to live independently. Taking steps now to guard against bias in how testing is administered so we can hold authorities to account is crucial,” said Cornett.

Oregon’s four million plus residents, have seen a dearth of testing for the COVID-19 virus. Testing is considered the backbone of the public health response and will provide public health officials with a clearer picture of the outbreak—a crucial tool in fighting this disease.

The Protection & Advocacy organizations demanded answers from [the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), including:

- **The number of tests that have been distributed** in each state, where those tests were distributed within the state, and when those test were made available to test recipients;
- All known formal or informal policies and practices used by the CDC, states and localities, that reflect the **criteria being used to determine who receives the tests**, when they receive the tests, and whether there are differences among providers, regions, states, and more local geographic or service provision areas;
- All available **demographic statistical information**, especially the known disability of persons who have been tested, or if disability is not asked.

Resources

- [Letter to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- [Situational Status Report from Oregon Office of Emergency Management and Oregon Health Authority](#)

About Disability Rights Oregon

Disability Rights Oregon upholds the civil rights of people with disabilities to live, work, and engage in the community. The nonprofit works to transform systems, policies, and practices to give more people the opportunity to reach their full potential. For more than 40 years, the organization has served as Oregon’s Protection & Advocacy system.

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