WHAT IS COVID-19 SCREENING?

Most of the current SARS-CoV2 testing in Montana is focused on diagnostic testing intended to determine whether a symptomatic individual is infected with SARS-CoV2 or not, with a high degree of confidence (so that they can be diagnosed and treated).

Screening for COVID-19 is done with asymptomatic individuals for purposes of making decisions that can help control infections and protect entire communities.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF SCREENING STRATEGIES?

- It is currently estimated at approximately 40% of those infected with SARS-CoV2 are asymptomatic. Despite not having symptoms, they can unknowingly infect others.

- Imagine you are fishing: A screening strategy provides a large fishing net that attempts to “catch” as many of these positive asymptomatic people as possible and isolate them before they infect others.

- By doing so, we can break the chain of infection more frequently. This way it is easier to control the spread of the virus so that we can better protect those who are vulnerable to severe illness and decrease the strain on our rural health care systems while keeping our economy and schools open.

HOW COULD LAMP SCREENING BE USED? WHAT DECISIONS MIGHT IT INFORM?

- Screening could be used to test everyone in long-term care facilities, students returning or living on campus, or in tribal communities.

- Screening could inform decisions about whether students can return to campus safely, whether travel to particular communities is safe, or whether visitors can be safe for assisted-living facilities.

Screening can also be employed to monitor the prevalence of infection within communities and to prevent outbreaks that may overwhelm quarantine facilities, or healthcare capacity.
IS SCREENING RELIABLE? WHAT ABOUT FALSE NEGATIVES?

- While PCR testing is widely considered the “gold standard” for diagnostic testing, LAMP still has a very high sensitivity and specificity that will be able to catch many positives.

- While fishing nets will also fail to catch some fish, you will catch a lot more than if you do not have a net at all.

HOW CAN LAMP SALIVA TESTING ALLOW US TO DO BROADER SCREENING FOR COVID-19?

- LAMP testing is much less expensive because it does not require as many resources, equipment, or personnel with technical expertise.

- LAMP testing is also much faster than other tests (results in approximately 45 minutes).

- This will allow us to significantly catch more positive cases in a faster and more cost-effective way.