Critical Values / Critical Results Policy Summary

PURPOSE

This policy describes the responsibilities for determining which tests performed by the Mayo Clinic Laboratories (MCL) fulfill the criteria for critical values / critical results and describes the processes for notification, read-back and report documentation of those results.

DEFINITIONS

A critical value is defined as a value that represents a pathophysiological state at such variance with normal (expected values) as to be life-threatening unless something is done promptly and for which some corrective action could be taken.

> **NOTE**: The critical values do not necessarily correspond directly with normal reference values, toxic ranges, or therapeutic ranges.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. **Notification:** The patient care provider or referring laboratory is notified when critical limits of specified test results are exceeded and/or critical results are obtained. In addition to the usual normal results reporting process (e.g. fax, computer interface). MCL staff telephone the ordering physician or the client-provided contact number within 60 minutes following laboratory release of the critical result(s) according to established procedures.

   In the event that contact is not made within the 60-minute period, MCL will continue to telephone until the designated party is reached and the result is conveyed. Critical results obtained by Point of Care (POC) testing are communicated to the treating healthcare provider by approved testing personnel, at the time testing is performed.

2. **Read-Back of Critical Value / Critical Results:** To verify the accuracy of patient information communicated via the telephone, the physician or designee responsible for patient care is required to read-back the patient name, unique patient numeric identification, and the critical test result(s).

3. **Documentation:** The critical high and low values are documented in the laboratory's standard operating procedure and defined in the laboratory computer information system.

   > **NOTE:** Records of notification and read back are documented according to established procedures.