



## K-12 School COVID-19 Screening Testing Program Overview

This document provides an overview of what the K-12 Screening Testing Program will offer to local education agencies (LEAs) and non-public schools, the details of the program's two options, and the roles and responsibilities of the vendor and participating schools. Information in this document is based on what is currently known about COVID-19 and may be subject to change. LEAs and nonpublic schools may use this information to help inform their entries in the associated survey ("Intake Process for K-12 Local Education Agencies and Non-Public Schools") that was shared with this informational packet, and can also be found here:

[https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_schools.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_schools.shtml)

Any questions can be directed to the NJDOH at [COVID.schooltesting@doh.nj.gov](mailto:COVID.schooltesting@doh.nj.gov).

### Introduction

The latest CDC guidance highlights that students benefit from in-person learning and recommends layered COVID-19 prevention strategies to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools and to reduce disruptions to students' in-person learning. COVID-19 screening testing in K-12 schools remains a primary CDC-recommended prevention strategy to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks<sup>1</sup>. NJDOH has received federal funding (referred to as "federal funds" hereafter) to support K-12 screening testing.

To support the safe return to full in-person learning, the NJ Department of Health (NJDOH) will offer COVID-19 testing support to K-12 local education agencies (LEAs) and non-public schools (e.g., private, independent, or parochial) for students and school staff<sup>2</sup> throughout New Jersey. These testing resources will also support covered entities in complying with [Executive Order No. 253](#).

**Testing resources will be provided through one of the following two options:**

- **Option 1: End-to-end screening testing will be provided on-site at schools by state-contracted vendor at no cost to LEAs and non-public schools until federal funds are expended.** This comprehensive service solution will include, at a minimum, the implementation, management, staffing, equipment, and daily operations needed to operate school testing clinics, including all required reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> [CDC](#) "Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools" (updated 8/5/21)

<sup>2</sup> School staff throughout this document is inclusive of all PreK-12 school employees who will be on-site at schools in the 2021-2022 school year. This includes, but is not limited to, teachers, environmental and building service workers, substitute teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, athletic coaches, or other adult in PreK-12 school buildings who regularly interact with students and has a contractual relationship with the LEAs or non-public school.

- **Option 2: For LEAs or non-public schools that already have a screening testing program or plan in place, NJDOH will offer funding to support screening testing efforts.** To receive funds to support contracts with independent vendors, LEAs and non-public schools must submit their COVID-19 screening testing and reporting plan and it must meet minimum requirements outlined by [NJDOH Communicable Disease Service \(CDS\) Screening Testing Guidance](#). If this option is selected, LEAs and non-public schools are expected to organize and implement their testing programs and the State will not provide end-to-end testing vendor services. Any entity that selects this option must continue to follow reporting requirements per the latest CDS guidance.

**All LEAs and non-public schools must complete the survey below to opt in or out of receiving State COVID-19 screening testing support. Any non-response will be considered an opt-out of participating in this program** (i.e., will receive neither vendor COVID-19 testing support nor direct funding support). All LEAs and non-public schools should complete the survey as soon as possible, and no later than Monday, September 13, 2021.

Survey can be found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/njschoolscreeningtesting>

## **FAQ for end-to-end COVID-19 testing support (Option 1)**

*What services will be provided?*

To make implementation of COVID-19 screening testing as streamlined as possible for schools, NJDOH has contracted with multiple vendors who offer end-to-end COVID-19 testing services. The NJDOH will provide vendors with the appropriate testing frequency and demographic information for each K-12 school district / school, based on CDS guidance and the CALI score of the region the school district / school is located. **End-to-end services means that these vendors will provide comprehensive testing services, from planning and coordination to test administration and reporting.**

These services include (but are not limited to):

- Provide all clinical and administrative staff to run the testing site
- Provide all testing supplies (e.g., testing swabs, specimen bags, PPE, shipping materials) and manage inventory
- Perform all test administration and specimen collection, including any transport to laboratories for processing
- Execute testing site setup, breakdown, and sanitation
- Manage medical and non-medical waste disposal
- Provide appropriate informational and coordination materials for testing (e.g., consent forms, registration)
- Supply administrative and peripheral supplies (e.g., tables, chairs, pens, paper towels) if school cannot
- Provide secure reporting of COVID-19 testing results to designated points of contact, the Local Health Department, and NJDOH

In addition to vendor services, NJDOE will also support LEAs in outreach and communications to students, staff, and parents/guardians as needed.

*What will LEAs' and non-public schools' responsibilities be for the testing program?*

The majority of the work needed to stand up and operate a K-12 school testing site should be performed by the contracted vendors such as implementation, management, staffing, equipment, daily operations, and reporting. The primary role of **LEAs and non-public schools will be to promote and communicate the testing program details to parents, families, and guardians, and to help coordinate with vendors as needed.**

Responsibilities may include:

- Complete NJDOH intake [survey](#) to opt-in to testing program (“Intake Process for K-12 Local Education Agencies and Non-Public Schools” survey)
- Identify a school location that may be safe and available to host testing; if there is no location on campus, schools should notify NJDOH, who can help to find a suitable alternative
- Promote testing program via outreach to families and distribution of informational or educational materials (e.g., FAQs, testing consent forms), with NJDOE support as needed
- Coordinate with vendor on planning, implementation, and troubleshooting (as needed) to ensure the testing site operations meet local needs and considerations

*What is the cost to LEAs and non-public schools for vendor support through this program?*

End-to-end vendor testing support will be provided at no cost to LEAs and non-public schools (e.g., private, independent, or parochial schools) until the funds allocated by the State are expended. After that time, LEAs may continue to support these testing programs at their own expense and may consider utilizing funds received from the federal government.

*What type of testing will be offered?*

Vendors will perform testing for students and school staff using **FDA-approved molecular (polymerase chain reaction (PCR), saliva, etc.) or antigen COVID-19 tests.** The NJDOH CDS recommends **rapid antigen testing** as a strong screening test option given its ability to be performed on-site and the immediacy of test results (15 - 30min). **For any individual who tests positive via the rapid antigen test, a follow-up confirmatory PCR will be provided** per CDS guidance.<sup>3</sup>

The NJDOH will work with vendors to outline the appropriate testing modality for each participating K-12 LEA and non-public school based on CDS guidance and the CALI score for a given LEA or non-public school.

*Who will be tested and how often?*

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<sup>3</sup> [CDS](#) “K-12 Screening Testing Guidelines” (published 8/24/21)

Which students and staff to test and the frequency of testing will be based on the **regional COVID-19 Activity Level (CALI) score**<sup>4</sup> of the district or school per the latest CDS guidance.<sup>5</sup> All vendors will provide testing programs in accordance with the latest CDS guidance and may adjust testing plans throughout the program to match a district or school's CALI score as needed. CALI score will not affect vendor assignment as all vendors will be able to implement any CDS testing strategy needed. **See Figure 1 for the latest CDS K-12 screening testing guidance that vendors will follow.** More testing details will be available once districts and schools are paired to vendors.

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<sup>4</sup> CALI score is New Jersey's COVID-19 Activity Level Index which calculates the transmission risk across New Jersey's 6 regions (Northwest, Northeast, Central West, Central East, Southwest, and Southeast). Latest reports may be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>

<sup>5</sup> [CDS](#) "K-12 Screening Testing Guidelines" (published 8/24/21)]

**Figure 1:** Screening Testing Matrix Based on COVID-19 Activity Level (CALI) from [CDS K-12 Screening Testing Guidelines](#) (published 8/24/21)

Low	Moderate	High	Very High
<b>Teachers and staff: Screening testing of teachers and staff who are not fully vaccinated at least once per week<sup>6</sup></b>			
<b>Students:</b> Screening testing for students may not be necessary <sup>7</sup>	<b>Students:</b> Screening testing of students who are not fully vaccinated or random samples of students <sup>8</sup> at least once per week		
<b>Sports<sup>9</sup> and high risk extracurricular<sup>10</sup> activities:</b> Testing of students and staff who are not fully vaccinated participating in all sports and higher-risk extracurricular activities at least once per week		<b>Higher risk sports and extracurricular activities<sup>11</sup>:</b> Testing of students and staff who are not fully vaccinated participating in these activities twice per week  <b>Lower risk sports:</b> Testing of students and staff who are not fully vaccinated participating in these activities at least once per week	

<sup>6</sup> Excludes persons who recently recovered from COVID-19 (i.e., tested positive in past 3 months) and as outlined in Executive Order 253.

<sup>7</sup> Unless participating in sports or high-risk extracurricular activities.

<sup>8</sup> Schools may consider testing a random sample of at least 10% of students for screening testing in areas of moderate or higher community transmission. Students participating in sports should only follow those testing guidelines.

<sup>9</sup> High-risk sports typically include those that cannot be done outdoors or with masks, or that involve close face to face contact. The NCAA has developed a risk stratification for sports that can provide guidance in implementation of the testing recommendations outlined above. See [https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ssi/COVID/SSI\\_ResocializationDevelopingStandardsSecondEdition.pdf](https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ssi/COVID/SSI_ResocializationDevelopingStandardsSecondEdition.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Higher risk extracurricular activities are those in which increased exhalation occurs, such as activities that involve singing, shouting, band, or exercise, especially when conducted indoors without a mask.

<sup>11</sup> High-risk sports typically include those that cannot be done outdoors or with masks, or that involve close face to face contact. The NCAA has developed a risk stratification for sports that can provide guidance in implementation of the testing recommendations outlined above. See [https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ssi/COVID/SSI\\_ResocializationDevelopingStandardsSecondEdition.pdf](https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ssi/COVID/SSI_ResocializationDevelopingStandardsSecondEdition.pdf)

**For students who develop symptoms while on school grounds or were found to be exposed to a COVID-19 positive case**, schools may follow their individual exclusion protocols, which may include rapid, diagnostic testing on-site. LEAs and non-public schools should follow the latest CDC guidance on isolation / quarantine and what is considered a close contact exposure<sup>12</sup>. Students and staff who develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 outside of school should remain at home, not attend school in-person until they meet local health guidance to return, and may be referred to community sites or their physician for COVID-19 testing.

*Where will COVID-19 testing happen?*

The testing program **will offer convenient, on-site COVID-19 screening testing in schools**. In the event school locations cannot be used for testing sites, the NJDOH intends to work selected vendor(s), in conjunction with school administrators and local public health entities to secure event locations to facilitate testing of students and school staff.

*Are there any additional testing programs available for schools?*

The “Operation Expanded Testing” program, supported and funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is also available and provides COVID-19 pool testing to K-12 schools at no cost to the school. This program is separate from the NJDOH program and is operated by Affinity Empowering on behalf of Clinical Enterprise, a Eurofins Scientific company. For additional information or to enroll visit: [Assure Covid-19 Testing - Affinity Empowering \(affinitytesting.com\)](https://www.assuretesting.com/)

*Where can I find additional information?*

For more information on K-12 school testing, please see:

- CDS’ “COVID-19: Information for Schools” [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_schools.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_schools.shtml)
- CDC’s “Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools”: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>
- CDC’s “School Testing for COVID-19” <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/school->

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<sup>12</sup> As of 8/5/21 CDC defines a close contact as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. This would apply for all adult employees. There is an exception for students if both the infected student and the exposed student correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time (CDC “[Appendices](#)” (updated 8/5/21)). Per CDS guidance (as of 3/23/21), “in the school setting, excluded individuals who are close contacts of staff or students who tested positive for COVID-19 may be considered for a reduced exclusion period based on Regional Risk Levels” (See NJDOH CDS “[COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#)” (updated 8/31/21))

[testing.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2F%2Fcovid19-school-testing%2Findex.html](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19-school-testing/index.html)

- CDS' Public Health recommendations for Implementing COVID-19 Screening Testing in K-12 Schools: [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/K-12\\_screening\\_testing\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/K-12_screening_testing_guidelines.pdf)
- CDS' "COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools": [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/RecommendationsForLocalHealthDepts\\_K12Schools.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/RecommendationsForLocalHealthDepts_K12Schools.pdf)
- CDC "Parents and Caregivers – What is Your School Doing to Protect Your Child from COVID-19": <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/parent-faqs.html>

## **FAQ for direct funding support for implementation of K-12 school screening testing (Option 2)**

*What is provided through the funding support option for screening testing offered by NJDOH?*

For LEAs and non-public schools that opt for funding support rather than support through state-contracted vendors, NJDOH will provide funding to implement or continue to operate a K-12 screening testing program that meets CDS [guidelines](#). Testing strategies should be developed in consultation with local health departments. LEAs and non-public schools that select this option will only receive funding support and will not be guaranteed any other support, such as operational or communications support. This option is open to all LEAs and non-public schools (e.g., charter, parochial, private, independent), but may be best suited for those that already have a screening testing program in place or are far along in contracting or standing up a screening testing program at their school(s).

*Can I apply to the funding program even if I do not have a testing plan?*

A testing plan does not need to be implemented at the time of application for funding, but at minimum, one must be developed that meets CDS guidelines in order to receive funding. The funding support option may be best suited for LEAs and non-public schools who are in the late stages of planning or already operationalizing their screening testing plans. For districts and schools without an implemented or planned COVID-19 screening testing program, NJDOH and NJDOE are also offering an option of end-to-end vendor support to stand-up a screening testing program on-site at schools.

*Can a school district or school choose to receive both end-to-end vendor and funding support from this program?*

No. No LEA or non-public school may receive both forms of screening testing support.

*How much funding will my LEA or non-public school receive through this program?*

NJDOH will provide funding to LEAs and non-public schools using a formula that considers enrollment and anticipated costs. Funds will be distributed on a monthly basis, and available until the State's program fund is expended.

Once the state-allocated funds are expended, schools are encouraged to utilize their own funds, including any Federal funds disbursed to schools, to support continued screening testing.

*What will LEAs' and non-public schools' responsibilities be for the funding program?*

LEAs and non-public schools will be responsible for creating and implementing a screening testing program that abides by NJDOH CDS guidelines and submitting it for NJDOH review and approval. NJDOH will not be responsible for implementation or execution of the testing program other than through the provision of funds.

Further, LEAs and non-public schools will be required to submit expenditures for reimbursement on a monthly basis. A standardized form and further details on the process of submitting these expenditures will be shared separately.

*What screening testing plan is required to participate in the funding program?*

To receive funding through this program, all LEAs and non-public schools must implement a screening testing program that meets the CDS guidelines and submit their plan for review and approval by NJDOH. See below for a summarized testing plan chart based on COVID-19 Activity Level Index (CALI) score. Full CDS guidelines may also be found here: [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/K-12\\_screening\\_testing\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/K-12_screening_testing_guidelines.pdf). It is the responsibility of the LEA and non-public school to ensure that any program implemented, whether via a contracted vendor or organized by school themselves, follows this guidance. Districts and schools may then submit their screening testing plan via the "Intake Process for K-12 Local Education Agencies and Non-Public Schools" survey at the time of opting-in to the funding program. Information LEAs and non-public schools need to report may include (but not limited to), who is being tested, how often individuals are being tested, what type of COVID-19 tests are being used, who will be administering the tests, where testing will occur, and names of any contracted vendors.

*Can LEAs and non-public schools change their testing plan during the funding period and still be eligible for funding?*

Changes to LEAs and non-public school screening testing plans are allowed, but any changes must meet CDS guidelines on K-12 screening testing to continue to be eligible for funding support. NJDOH should be notified of any changes to the submitted and approved screening testing plan prior to implementation. If CDS guidance changes, districts and schools will be notified of the adjustment and given time to revise their screening testing plans as needed.

*Can LEAs and non-public schools apply for additional funding from other sources if the allocated funding does not cover the full costs of testing?*

Yes. LEAs and non-public schools may apply for additional funding from external sources but must make NJDOH and NJDOE aware of any awards of additional funding. Districts and schools must also only have one source cover an expense and should not



seek reimbursement for expenses that have been covered by another funding source. School entities may also consider using funds received through the federal government.

*Can the funds allocated be used for other COVID-19 prevention and mitigation efforts outside of testing?*

At this time, the funds offered as part of this program are to be dedicated to COVID-19 screening testing and should not be spent on other costs outside of screening testing efforts.

*Do LEAs and schools need CLIA certification of waiver receive funding?*

A CLIA (Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments) certificate of waiver is necessary to administer, process, and read COVID-19 tests on school grounds. The entity administering tests (whether school or vendor) must have a CLIA certification of waiver. For example, if the testing is administered by the vendor, the vendor must obtain a CLIA certification of waiver. If the testing is administered by the school, the school must obtain a CLIA certification of waiver. If a LEA or non-public school contracts with a CLIA-certified vendor, the school does not need its own, separate CLIA certification of waiver. Appropriate CLIA certifications are required to receive funding through this program.

*Will testing services depend on the insurance status of students / staff?*

Testing vendors may ask for insurance information of students / staff who are tested, to help offset costs of the program. Insurance status will not affect the testing services offered, and testing will be conducted with no out of pocket costs to students and staff.

## **Next steps**

All LEAs and non-public schools (e.g., private, independent, parochial) must complete the survey (link below) to either opt-in or opt-out of receiving state-sponsored COVID-19 screening testing support. **All LEAs and non-public schools are expected to complete the survey and a non-response will be considered as an opt-out of State support** (i.e., will receive neither vendor COVID-19 testing support nor direct funding support).

**Please complete the [survey](#) below no later than September 13, 2021.**

For additional information please go to:

[https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_schools.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_schools.shtml)

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