

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## What is the purpose of the Universal COVID-19 Testing Program?

The required **COVID-19 Testing Program** has several goals, including:

- Reducing school closures and quarantines and allowing for more in-person instruction.
- Identifying potential cases of COVID-19 in the school population early, reducing transmission.
- Driving down overall rates in our community by alerting those who may need to isolate before they show symptoms.
- Providing a family and personal benefit for participants of knowing their current COVID-19 status.

Studies have shown that similar programs have driven down transmission rates in the areas they cover. With bi-weekly testing, we would have a more accurate assessment of COVID-19 rates and risks on campus, providing an extra layer of reassurance for providing in-person instruction in addition to the many safety measures already in place.

## Please describe the test

We will be conducting routine PCR tests to screen for COVID-19. The PCR tests take just a few seconds to collect and the collection process is **not** painful. This test is different and less invasive than the nasopharyngeal test that goes deep in the nose. A trained medical assistant or registered nurse will gently rotate the swab at the inner tip of the nose for a couple seconds. During the specimen collection children do not experience pain. The entire process from start to finish is completed in less than 1 minute and you will receive your child's results within 24-48hrs.

The following video is an example of the test collection process...click [here](#)

## Why is this required for unvaccinated Students and Staff?

The best way of keeping educational institutions open for in-person learning is to control the transmission of COVID-19 and to ensure early identification of infected staff and students. COVID-19 PCR testing is the most effective way in identifying positive COVID cases. Research has shown that frequent testing can significantly control outbreaks and reduce in-school infections when combining it with additional safety measures such as mask wearing and social distancing. In order to minimize transmission within our community, it is essential that there are high levels of participation from both students and staff. Requiring routine COVID-19 testing ensures that everyone will know their own status, especially those that may be asymptomatic carriers of the virus. This testing program will allow us to identify carriers of the COVID-19 virus thus minimizing the likelihood of them unknowingly spreading it to many others.

## Are there any exemptions to this required testing program?

Yes. Exemptions will be granted in certain limited cases:

- Students who need a medical exemption, due to a health condition that would make it unsafe to undergo testing. This request must be signed by a physician and you must submit medical documentation from a licensed health care provider.
  - Click [here](#) for medical exemption application
- Students with disabilities who cannot be safely tested in school due to the nature of their disability will be able to submit a separate request for an exemption.
  - Click [here](#) for disability exemption application
- Students that have been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 90 days will not need to test
  - Medical documentation confirming diagnosis is required
- Students that are fully vaccinated may opt out of testing
  - Proof of vaccination is required

Each request will be evaluated and approved on a case by case basis by our Head Nurse. Please reach out to your school administrator or school nurse if you are requesting an exemption for your child.

#### When and where will the testing take place?

Once every other week a local medical agency will come to your child's campus for testing. The testing will take place during the school day, inside their classroom, and at a time that will not interfere with academic instruction.

If your child is absent they will be tested the following session during their scheduled day and time.

#### What documentation is required for testing?

Everyone undergoing testing will need to complete a consent form and a lab requisition form. Although insurance information is requested you will not be billed for the test or collection process. You will not receive a bill in the mail, but you may receive an explanation of benefits (EOB), which will identify any lab charges - but that is **not** a bill.

In the rare event that you do receive a bill in the mail - you should **not** pay that bill. Please notify Northshore Clinical Laboratories immediately. This service is completely free of charge to you. If you do not have insurance you may enter your Driver's License or State ID information.

You will receive a link in the upcoming days to complete this documentation. If you have any questions or concerns please reach out to your child's school administrator or school nurse.

\*If you do not have an insurance card or a government issued ID a waiver is available upon request.

**Please click [HERE](#) to sign the consent forms for COVID-19 testing.**

#### How will I know my test results?

Testing results will be emailed to you at an email address of your choice. You will receive your results within 24-48hrs of sample collection.

### What should I do when I receive my test results?

If your child's test results are negative, this means that the virus was not detected requiring no further follow up.

If your child's test results are positive, this means that the virus was detected and further follow up is required. We ask that you notify your child's healthcare provider and school administrator. You will be instructed to keep your child home and begin isolation. Someone from our nursing team will reach out to you to complete contact tracing.

### Are my child's results confidential?

Yes. All test results will be reported in a secure and confidential manner. Positive test results will only be released with your consent. LEARN may use and disclose positive test results, while keeping your privacy, for purposes of identifying close contacts through contact tracing. We are legally required to keep your test results, both positive and negative, confidential.

### What happens to my child's test sample after collection?

The lab processing the test results will immediately destroy samples and will not keep any records related to students through the usage of a commercial medical waste provider.

### Will testing replace other safety measures at the school?

Our testing program will not take the place of additional health and safety measures such as mask wearing, social distancing, and enhanced cleaning -- all measures that collectively make the risk of in-school transmission very low. Instead, it is an additional tool that can help ensure asymptomatic individuals do not come to our campuses and to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the community by identifying individuals who may have COVID-19

### What happens if my child is crying or uncooperative during testing?

If your child is crying, scared or cannot sit independently during testing then their test will be postponed until the next week. We will not force any children to be tested and we will only test children if it is safe to do so.

### Why am I just hearing about this new testing program?

As you can imagine, implementing such a large scale testing program is a big decision and we wanted to make sure that it was the right decision for our staff and students. We were given the opportunity to continue our partnership with Northshore Clinical Laboratories for COVID-19 testing services. It was important for us to find a testing program that was safe, free for our families, highly effective, and flexible enough to fulfill all of the needs of our campuses across the network. Although we do understand that this decision is coming out just before we reopen, we are excited in knowing that it will help maintain a safe environment for everyone.

