



Colchester School District

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November 4, 2021

CSD Community,

As we've shared in some recent emails, the Agency of Education and the Department of Health have set up several testing options for districts to offer to families and employees. After careful consideration and analysis, we have decided to transition away from surveillance testing in favor of two other models that will increase testing convenience for families and allow students more access to in-person learning. More information about the rationale and a description of the new testing options are below.

COVID Testing Changes - Key Takeaways:

- **Starting on November 8, all schools will offer Response PCR Testing.** During the school day, students and employees can take a test at school, as needed, without having to schedule an appointment or travel to an alternate testing location.
- **Starting on November 15, the district will begin piloting the Test to Stay program (TTS).** This program allows unvaccinated, symptom-free, individuals identified as close contacts to continue coming to school by taking a rapid test each morning.
- **The district will no longer be offering weekly surveillance testing.**
- **To participate in Response PCR Testing and/or the Test to Stay Program, you must fill out BOTH consent forms for each individual.** We highly encourage anyone who may want to take advantage of either testing opportunity to sign up ASAP so their consent is on file.
 1. State Consent Form: [SY22 COVID-19 Testing Program Consent Form](#)
 2. School Consent Form:
 - Colchester High School: <http://simplereport.gov/register/FJHT9>
 - Colchester Middle School: <http://simplereport.gov/register/AQJYA>
 - Malletts Bay School: <http://simplereport.gov/register/78RW9>
 - Porters Point School: <http://simplereport.gov/register/6FEYG>
 - Union Memorial School: <http://simplereport.gov/register/38Z7G>
 - Districtwide Employees: <http://simplereport.gov/register/3WDXA>

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Rationale for Discontinuing Surveillance Testing

Currently, the district offers weekly testing through the state's surveillance testing program. This program is designed to identify COVID cases in asymptomatic individuals by testing healthy students who are in school without symptoms. Over the past six weeks, the district has administered 2,900 tests and zero have come back positive. Running the program each Monday takes an enormous number of staff and requires hours of work before, during, and after the testing to manage the consent list, administer and register tests, and sort the materials. At this point, since the program is not identifying any unknown positive cases, it makes more sense to shift the manpower and testing resources into the two other testing models that will increase convenience for families with sick children and also allow healthy children who have been identified as close contacts to continue coming to school.

Response PCR Testing Overview

Response PCR Testing makes it more convenient to access testing. If a student develops symptoms while at school, and they have already completed the two consent forms linked above, the nurse will call the parent/guardian and offer to test their student before they are sent home. This will eliminate the need to schedule a test elsewhere and travel to that location. We must stress that families should not send sick children to school to be tested. Individuals who develop symptoms at home should stay home and test at their primary care office or another testing location.

Response PCR Testing is also available for vaccinated individuals identified as close contacts. While vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine, the health department does recommend they test 3-5 days after exposure, and with Response PCR Testing, they could do that right at school. Response PCR Testing will be available starting on Monday.

The consent process is hosted through the state and takes time to register. If you would like to be eligible to test at school, we strongly encourage you to fill out the two forms at the top and bottom of this letter.

Test to Stay Program (TTS) Overview

The goal behind this program is to reduce the time that quarantined students are away from school. Test to Stay (TTS) is for unvaccinated individuals, with no symptoms, who have been identified as close contacts from an exposure at school. Instead of quarantining and doing school work at home, students would take a rapid-results antigen each morning during their quarantine period and can attend school, clubs, and sporting practice with a negative result.

- TTS is only available for exposures that happen at school because schools have strong mitigation measures in place like masking, distancing, and cohorting which makes transmission

less likely. If your child is identified as a close contact from an outside event like a social gathering or activity, they cannot participate in TTS and must quarantine.

- The Agency of Education (AOE) and Vermont Department of Health (VDH) have made it clear that TTS *only allows students to come to school and participate in school events*. When not at school, unvaccinated close contacts should be at home and following the quarantine procedures outlined by the VDH.
- Vaccinated close contacts do not need to quarantine, and therefore do not need to participate in TTS.
- We are finalizing the logistical details of how we'll run TTS in Colchester. It is possible that we will utilize one centralized testing location to ensure it can be properly staffed and hopefully limit the disruption to family schedules. We will share more details about how this will work as we get closer to starting the program.
- One of our biggest challenges in starting the TTS program is the need for staffing. Ideally, we're looking for people to be available on an on-call basis between the hours of 6:00 and 11:00 am, but primarily in the hours before school starts. If you know someone who might be interested in helping us, please [visit the job posting](#) and consider applying!

Take-Home PCR Tests Overview

As simple as it sounds. Schools will be able to give out take-home test kits to families and staff. The tests are self-administered and include a shipping box and pre-paid shipping label. Currently, these tests are in high demand and short supply. We do not know when we'll be able to offer these to families and staff but will update as soon as we have some in stock.

Providing Consent/How to Sign Up

All of these testing options are voluntary and require two online consent forms. As we've seen in the positive cases so far this school year, it can happen at any time in any school. We strongly suggest that families fill out the consent forms ahead of time so they are prepared and can test without delay if a need arises.

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We hope this answers some of your questions and provides insight into the decisions being made. It is always our goal to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students and staff. We are truly doing the best we can under the circumstances and with the staffing and resources available to us. Thank you for your continued support.

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