



# School COVID Testing Initiatives

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **WHY SHOULD STUDENTS OR STAFF BE TESTED FOR COVID-19?**

COVID-19 surveillance testing is a critical part of breaking the cycle of spreading the virus, so that contact tracers can find COVID-19 and contain it before it spreads to anyone else. The goal of regular COVID-19 testing in schools is to quickly find individual cases and increase the amount of in-person learning days.

When used alongside other prevention strategies like vaccination and face masks, COVID-19 surveillance testing creates an additional level of reassurance that it is safe to keep schools open with students and educators together in the classroom.

### **WHY IS ROUTINE SURVEILLANCE TESTING FOR COVID-19 SO IMPORTANT?**

Routine surveillance testing is the best way we can find and isolate individuals with COVID-19 without symptoms, before they spread the virus to others. Individuals with COVID-19 can be infectious for 2- 3 days before showing symptoms. In addition, recent research suggests that more than one-third of people infected with COVID-19 never show any symptoms at all – they are asymptomatic.

### **IS TESTING MANDATORY TO ATTEND SCHOOL?**

Schools do not require COVID-19 testing to attend classes. However, there are some sports programs or leagues who do require participation in a COVID- 19 surveillance testing program in order to be eligible to play. Your school will communicate these requirements as they arise.

### **HOW DOES THE TESTING PROGRAM WORK? WHAT'S INVOLVED?**

Maryland is offering two free COVID-19 testing programs for schools statewide: Diagnostic Testing Program and/or the Surveillance Testing Program. Your child's school has chosen to participate in one or both of the COVID-19 testing programs. Both programs are designed to quickly find positive cases, either symptomatic or asymptomatic, to control the spread of the virus.

The goal of the Surveillance Testing Program is to catch any asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic COVID-19 cases as early as possible. In the Surveillance Testing Program, your child's school will work with MAKO to implement the testing program in your child's school. Testing frequency and processes for testing will be determined by your child's school in consultation with MAKO, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, your Local Health Department, and the Maryland Department of Health.

### **WHAT KIND OF TEST WILL YOU USE?**

This will depend on your child's school; however, the COVID-19 tests typically conducted include the use of painless lower nasal swabs or saliva collection. Our vendors are NOT using the deep nasal or "brain tickler" swabs.

If your child's school participates in the surveillance testing program, onsite staff will be available to assist in the administration of the test. Alternatively, children as young as age 5 are able to administer their own

test under the observation of a trained test administrator.

Samples will be sent to the MAKO lab, which will provide results directly to parents within 48 hours from when the test was taken.

### **HOW WILL I GET MY CHILD'S TEST RESULTS?**

An online account will be created where you can log in and check results. Additional processes for notifying parents of a positive test result will be communicated by your child's school.

### **WILL TESTING DISRUPT LEARNING OR SCHOOL SCHEDULES?**

COVID-19 testing times and frequency will likely vary by location, as each school designs a testing program which works for them. However, every effort will be made to schedule testing during non-academic times of the day, such as lunch, to avoid disruption of learning. Testing itself takes only a few seconds, so students should not miss valuable instruction.

### **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY TESTS POSITIVE?**

If a person tests positive for COVID-19, they should follow the guidance of their health care provider, their school/school system policies and follow MDH and CDC guidelines for Isolation and Quarantine. Depending on whether the person who tests positive for COVID-19 is fully vaccinated, or develops symptoms, different guidelines may be advised. Also, please answer the call or text from MD COVID or (240) 466-4488 to help Maryland contact tracers slow the spread of COVID-19.

### **HOW WILL SCHOOLS AND MDH PROTECT MY PRIVACY?**

Any private health information or positive test results will only be communicated to trusted school health staff and administrators on a need-to-know/required basis for the purpose of contact tracing to prevent further transmission and protect other teachers, staff, students, and families within the school community. All health information is kept private and is protected by federal and state privacy rules.

When a positive case is identified through an individual diagnostic test, that student or staff member will be immediately isolated in a way that protects their privacy. Remember there are many reasons an individual might have to leave a classroom or stay home from school.

### **WILL MY CHILD BE TESTED WITHOUT MY CONSENT?**

No. Only students whose parents have completed a consent form will be included in the he more students who are tested, the more likely we are to reduce the spread of COVID in our schools.