What parents and guardians need to know about the COVID-19 Test to Stay Program

Schools can customize the information below to help address frequently asked questions from parents/caregivers about the COVID-19 “Test to Stay” Program offered at their school.

Replace the text highlighted in [yellow] to tailor your messaging. The header and footer can also be customized by double-clicking in the area and changing shape colors.

If you need assistance with this template FAQ, contact Jon Kromm (jkromm@healthmanagement.com) or Liddy Garcia-Bunuel (lgarciabunuel@healthmanagement.com)

Do you have questions about the free COVID-19 “Test to Stay” Program at [school name]?
Below are answers to questions you may have.

Why is our school testing for COVID-19?
Vaccinating children ages 5 and older is the most important way to protect students and our community from the spread of COVID-19. Screening testing is also important for catching outbreaks early and preventing the spread of COVID-19 in our school. [School name] is participating in the COVID-19 Testing Program to test students who are not yet vaccinated on a weekly basis to screen for COVID-19. This testing is free of charge to families. While participation is optional, families are encouraged to sign up for free testing by following the directions at [add school QR code link].

What is the COVID-19 “Test to Stay” Program?
In addition to the weekly screening testing through the COVID-19 Testing Program, [School name] offers free, daily testing for students who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 to allow them to remain in school during their quarantine period if they continue to test negative for the virus.

How the “Test to Stay” Program Works

Who can participate in the “Test to Stay” Program?
Students who are enrolled in [School name]’s COVID-19 Testing Program with an up-to-date consent form are eligible for the “Test to Stay” Program. If they are exposed to someone with COVID-19, they can participate in “Test to Stay.” To remain in school during their quarantine period, the student must

• Show no symptoms
• Continue to test negative during the quarantine period
• Must correctly wear a mask indoors when at school
• Must continue to quarantine when not at school

Keep in mind that this is not a community testing program. Only students and staff who are quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure can participate.

How does “Test to Stay” work for my student?
If a student was exposed to someone with COVID-19 in school, the school nurse will contact the student’s parent/caregiver notifying them that their student has been exposed and that they have the option to remain in school during their quarantine period by receiving daily testing through the “Test to Stay” Program. If the parent/caregiver consents to having their student receive daily testing through the “Test to Stay” Program, the school nurse will provide details on the location and timing of daily testing. The student will need to be picked up on the day the parent is notified of the potential exposure (unless they test negative that morning through the regular COVID-19 Testing Program) but
can return to class the next day if they test negative that evening in the “Test to Stay” Program and do not have any symptoms of COVID-19. Students must follow infection control measures, including appropriate mask use, while remaining in school through the “Test to Stay” program.

If a student was exposed to someone with COVID-19 outside of school, parents/caregivers and students must let the school nurse or designated school point of contact know of this exposure in order for the student to participate in the “Test to Stay” Program, receive daily testing, and remain in school during their quarantine period. If the parent/caregiver consents to having their student receive daily testing through the “Test to Stay” Program, the school nurse will provide details on the location and timing of daily testing.

Can my student participate in the “Test to Stay” Program if they are not enrolled in the COVID-19 Testing Program?
Your student must be enrolled in the school’s COVID-19 Testing Program to receive weekly screening tests to participate in the “Test to Stay” Program. However, if your student is exposed to COVID-19 before signing up for the COVID-19 Testing Program, they can be immediately enrolled in the program so that they may participate in the “Test to Stay” Program as well as weekly testing going forward. Students should be enrolled prior to arriving at the “Test to Stay” site.

What if my student is exposed to COVID-19 and does not participate in “Test to Stay”?
If your student is exposed to COVID-19 and does not participate in “Test to Stay,” then they must stay home from school for 5 days while remaining asymptomatic following their known exposure.

Does my student need to participate in weekly testing or “Test to Stay” if they are fully vaccinated?
No. However, if they are partially vaccinated or not vaccinated at all, it is recommended that they receive weekly screening testing through participation in the COVID-19 Testing Program and daily testing while quarantining in the “Test to Stay” Program.

How will students be tested in the “Test to Stay” Program?
Students in “Test to Stay” will receive an antigen test in the evening before every school day for 5 days following a known exposure to COVID-19. Students must be asymptomatic and continue to test negative for COVID-19 to participate in “Test to Stay.” If the fifth day of quarantine falls on a day schools are closed for students (weekends, holidays, and in-service days), your child will not need to test to return to school on the next school day if they continue to show no symptoms and wear a well-fitting mask. The scenarios below provide examples of how the timing of the quarantine period impacts the testing requirements.

**Scenario 1:** A student begins to quarantine on Friday. They will need to test negative on Sunday evening, Monday, and Tuesday to remain in school and be cleared to exit the Test to Stay protocol.

**Scenario 2:** A student begins to quarantine on Tuesday with day 5 of their quarantine period falling on a Saturday. The student will need to test negative on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday to remain in school. The student will not need additional testing over the weekend to return to school on Monday.

The antigen tests will involve a quick and easy nasal swab. The swab will be observed by a clinician and done by the student or, if assistance is needed, the swab will be performed by trained clinical staff.

**When and where will the tests occur?**
The “Test to Stay” Program will be testing students after school or in the evenings between 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. for admittance the following school day. Testing will be conducted at sites throughout the state and is free to all families. To check locations and hours, please visit the "Test to Stay" locator map.

**Will testing be available on Sundays so they can go back to school on Monday?**
Testing is available on Sundays at some “Test to Stay” sites. To check locations and hours, please visit the "Test to Stay" locator map.
How long will it take to receive test results?
Results for antigen tests will be available typically within 30 minutes after the test is conducted.

How will parents/caregivers be notified of results?
Parents/caregivers can wait in the parking lot of the test location for testing staff to come to their car to deliver test results approximately 30 minutes after the test. Parents/caregivers will also be notified of results directly by email from Quidel, our testing partner. Parents/caregivers will need to forward this email to [school inbox email address] for their student to attend school the next day. If the test result email is not forwarded to [school inbox email address] before the start of the next school day, your student will not be allowed to attend school that day.

Can students in “Test to Stay” participate in sports and other extracurricular activities?
If your student tests negative and is able to remain in school during their quarantine period through the “Test to Stay” Program, they may also participate in extracurricular activities. However, this does not include weekend activities, as testing is not available on Friday or Saturday evenings.

What if my student tests positive?
We will ask you to keep your student home. You will be asked to provide information about your student’s close contacts so that everyone who has been exposed can be notified. We will also be in touch to assist you in connecting your student with medical care and other support for your student and family, if needed. [School to add additional information on quarantine policy, as appropriate].

How will the school protect my student’s privacy?
Testing results will be shared only for public health purposes, which may include notifying close contacts that they may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and taking other steps to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in your school community. Information sharing and notifying of contacts will be done in a way that protects your student’s privacy. Your student’s name and personal information will never be shared as part of this program. Sharing of information about your student will only be done in accordance with applicable laws and policies protecting student privacy and the security of your student’s information.

The CDC recommends everyone 5 years and older get up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines to help protect against COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and free. Getting vaccinated prevents severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. Additionally, vaccinated students and staff do not have to quarantine after being exposed to someone with COVID-19. Visit vaccines.gov to find vaccination providers near you.