Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is offering enhanced comprehensive school-based testing for teachers, staff, students, and their families for the 2021-2022 school year. This program is intended to help public, private, and independent charter schools operate safely by connecting schools with appropriate vendors to meet their testing needs.

Participation in the program is voluntary. Testing supplies, diagnostics, and swabbing services are provided free of cost.

DHS recommends that participating schools and school districts design their testing program in alignment with the CDC's Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html). Testing programs can include any of the following elements using rapid, point of care antigen tests and/or highly accurate, laboratory-based tests:

- **Diagnostic testing for symptomatic individuals and close contacts as well as outbreak support**
- **Testing participants and/or attendees of school-based events or activities**
- **Regular screening testing for asymptomatic individuals (such as weekly screenings)**

This testing program is intended to complement other mitigation efforts in schools, such as universal and correct use of masks, maintaining adequate physical distancing, thorough handwashing, and vaccination.

### THREE KEY REASONS TO TEST IN SCHOOLS

- **Testing helps reduce community spread and keeps schools operating safely.** Testing individuals who are symptomatic and close contacts helps enable rapid detection of cases to reduce or prevent school outbreaks. A routine screening testing program, which regularly tests people without symptoms or known exposures, is a crucial tool to reduce “silent” spread of the virus. According to the CDC, at least 50% of infections are likely contracted from someone that is asymptomatic (showing no symptoms) or pre-symptomatic (not currently showing symptoms but may develop them in the future). Testing also helps protect children who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated and helps determine when fully vaccinated individuals with COVID-19 symptoms can return to school.

- **Testing increases confidence in schools’ ability to operate safely.** Students, parents/guardians, teachers, and staff may be anxious about returning to in-person learning without knowing whether they may be exposed to infection by others in the school community. Strong testing programs with regular and transparent data sharing can help build confidence in school safety.

- **Testing in schools helps ensure equitable access.** Schools can help make testing a trusted, convenient, and safe part of the community on a schedule that works for kids, teachers, staff and their families without requiring extra appointments or transportation.

### LEARN MORE AND SIGN UP

Visit www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/schools.htm to learn more about Wisconsin's COVID-19 school testing program and how your school can sign up. If you have questions about the program, email DHSK12CovidTesting@dhs.wisconsin.gov.