

# School-Based COVID-19 Testing Playbook



A Guide for COVID-19 Testing in Your School



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## Overview of School-Based COVID-19 Testing

Testing is a critical element of an effective COVID-19 response, allowing positive cases to be identified and isolated, and initiating the contact tracing process. The “test-trace-isolate” process breaks potential chains of transmission and mitigates potential outbreaks. Having a School-Based COVID-19 Testing program ensures that everyone has access to a same-day test as needed and with a turnaround time that enables them to act on the results.

Providing testing in schools — one of the most trusted community institutions — helps break down geographic, social, and economic barriers to testing access. Ensuring that everyone who needs a test receives one helps prevent outbreaks. Schools and individuals can also help keep their communities safe with a collective commitment to handwashing, staying home while sick, and disclosing if they are experiencing symptoms.

School-based testing offers numerous benefits, including reducing lost learning days by providing real-time data for swift decision-making. It facilitates safe continuous in-person learning by detecting positive cases earlier, minimizing outbreaks and transmission. Moreover, it alleviates anxiety among staff, students, and families.

Schools that want to provide COVID-19 testing, but are starting from scratch, can use the Implementation Checklist ([Appendix 1](#)) to guide design choices. [Appendix 2](#) includes a draft project management timeline — building a brand-new testing program can be accelerated by using rapid antigen self-tests.

This playbook serves as a summary resource for schools designing, building, and sustaining COVID-19 testing programs in Washington State. Additional support is available through the Washington State Department of Health and the 9 Educational Service Districts.



## Testing Supplies Management

### Inventory Management

The following guide provides information on how to document inventory, manage inventory, and order new supply. Schools can reach out to their [Educational Service District \(ESD\) Coordinator](#) with questions and next steps regarding testing supply. Supply ordering questions can also be sent to [COVIDtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov](mailto:COVIDtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov) for assistance.

### COVID-19 Test Supply Order Process

School districts, tribal schools, and private schools in need of COVID-19 rapid tests can order supplies via the [School Test Request Form \(smartsheet.com\)](#).

See the School Covid-19 Testing Vendor Resources section on [page 9](#) of this Playbook for more information on how to order testing supplies by test type.

## COVID-19 Test Supply Inventory Documentation

It is important for your school to take stock of their current COVID-19 testing inventory to ensure accuracy, spot potential supply gaps, and ensure that you are outbreak ready.

- Performing periodic inventory counts throughout the school year is also beneficial to **ensure a consistent 1-2 month supply** including extra test kits for a potential outbreak.
- Documenting current inventory at the end of the school year ensures your school is prepared to return the following year with an accurate understanding of remaining supply and an idea of whether tests need to be reordered.

See [Appendix 3](#) for a list of testing supplies, non-testing supplies, and a template for inventory management. If inventory is in multiple locations, be sure to count stock on the same day around the same time. The Supply Inventory Management Template ([Appendix 4](#)) is a helpful tool when documenting supply inventory.

## Types of COVID-19 Testing Supplies

As of July 2023, Washington State Department of Health can provide access to free testing supplies, which include point-of-care (POC) and over the counter (OTC) test kits.





## Testing Strategies

### Diagnostic Testing

Diagnostic testing is used when individuals are showing symptoms or have likely been exposed. This test can confirm if the individual has COVID-19.

### Screening Testing

Screening testing is the routine testing of individuals who do not have symptoms or known exposure. With a screening strategy, schools can identify infected individuals early so measures can be taken to prevent those individuals from infecting others.

## Medical Test Site (MTS) License Requirements for POC Testing

Schools that wish to perform point-of-care testing for COVID-19 (or any other disease) **MUST** have an active Medical Test Site (MTS) license\*. An MTS license is a certification that allows a facility in Washington state to legally examine a person through waived tests for the purpose of diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of disease.

Schools **seeking a new license** should complete the [Certificate of Waiver Medical Test Site \(MTS\) Application Packet](#). Schools seeking to renew an existing license can reach out to their [Educational Service District](#) for support.

*\*An MTS license has also been referred to as a CLIA waiver (Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments).*

## Test Supply Storage Guidance

The following guide provides information on storage instructions, disposal instructions, and shelf-life information for rapid antigen tests. Schools can reach out to [Educational Service District \(ESD\) Coordinator](#) with questions and next steps regarding testing supply. Supply ordering questions can also be sent to [COVIDtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov](mailto:COVIDtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov) for assistance.

## Storage and Disposal Instructions for Rapid Antigen Tests

Rapid Antigen Test	Storage	Disposal
BD Veritor SARS-CoV-2 Rapid Antigen PoC	The BD Veritor test kits should be stored at 35.6° F to 86° F. Do not freeze. Ensure all test components are at room temperature before use. BD Veritor Analyzers have a maximum of a 2-year shelf life or a 3,500 test capacity limit. Customers will be alerted or prompted on screen prior to the expiration to purchase a replacement analyzer.  See the <a href="#">Rapid Antigen Toolkit</a> for more information. See the <a href="#">BD Veritor POC Toolkit</a> .	Rapid antigen tests that cannot be used must be disposed of per manufacturer requirements in the Instructions for Use.
BD Veritor Triplex SARS-CoV-2 & Flu A+B Rapid Antigen PoC	The BD Veritor Triplex test kits should be stored at 36° F to 86° F. Do not freeze. Ensure all test components are at room temperature before use.	Rapid antigen tests that cannot be used must be disposed of per manufacturer requirements in the Instructions for Use.
BinaxNow Pro Rapid Antigen PoC	The BinaxNOW test kits should be stored at 35.6° F to 86° F. Ensure all test components are at room temperature before use.	Rapid antigen tests that cannot be used must be disposed of per manufacturer requirements in the Instructions for Use.
iHealth Rapid Antigen OTC	The iHealth test kits should be stored in a dry place at 36° F to 86° F. Ensure all test components are at room temperature (65° F to 86° F) before use.	Rapid antigen tests that cannot be used must be disposed of per manufacturer requirements in the Instructions for Use.
InteliSwab	Store unused InteliSwab® COVID-19 Rapid Test kits unopened at 2° - 30° C (35° -86° F). Do not open the Divided Pouch until you are ready to perform the test. If stored refrigerated, ensure that the Divided Pouch is brought to operating temperature (15° - 40° C, 59° - 104° F) before opening.	Rapid antigen tests that cannot be used must be disposed of per manufacturer requirements in the Instructions for Use.

## Use of Expired Tests

The printed expiration date on your rapid antigen test may no longer be accurate. Tests may continue to receive new, extended expiration date extensions as additional performance data is made available to the FDA. The FDA maintains a [list of authorized over-the-counter tests](#) which has up-to-date details and shelf life of each test kit, by Lot Number (printed on the packaging).

On May 11, 2023, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued a memorandum that ended the permission for laboratories to use expired COVID-19 tests. If your tests have expired, DOH recommends disposal of these tests once you have replenished your inventory with new non-expired tests. To order new tests, please reach out to your [ESD coordinator](#) or [COVIDtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov](mailto:COVIDtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov) for further assistance on next steps.





## School Covid-19 Testing Vendor Resources

The following guide provides information on the school COVID-19 tests and resources available. Schools can reach out to their [ESD coordinator](#) with questions and next steps regarding testing supply. Supply ordering questions can also be sent to [COVIDtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov](mailto:COVIDtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov) for assistance.

Vendor	Vendor Description	Vendor Resources	Supplies Ordering
BD Veritor <i>Point of Care Testing ONLY</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid antigen</li> <li>• Supplied by DOH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">BD Veritor Implementation Toolkit</a> &amp; SOPs</li> <li>• <a href="#">Translated consent forms</a></li> </ul>	Please order tests using the <a href="#">School Test Request Form</a> . If your school/district name is not listed on the dropdown menu, please contact <a href="mailto:covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov">covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov</a> for assistance.
BD Veritor Triplex <i>Point of Care Testing ONLY</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid antigen</li> <li>• Supplied by DOH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">BD Veritor Implementation Toolkit</a> &amp; SOPs</li> <li>• <a href="#">Translated consent forms</a></li> </ul>	Please order tests using the <a href="#">School Test Request Form</a> . If your school/district name is not listed on the dropdown menu, please contact <a href="mailto:covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov">covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov</a> for assistance.
BinaxNow <i>Point of Care Testing ONLY</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid antigen</li> <li>• Supplied by DOH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Rapid Antigen Toolkit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Translated consent forms</a></li> </ul>	Please order tests using the <a href="#">School Test Request Form</a> . If your school/district name is not listed on the dropdown menu, please contact <a href="mailto:covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov">covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov</a> for assistance.
iHealth <i>Point of Care or Over the Counter Testing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid antigen</li> <li>• Supplied by DOH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Rapid Antigen Toolkit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Translated consent forms</a></li> </ul>	Please order tests using the <a href="#">School Test Request Form</a> . If your school/district name is not listed on the dropdown menu, please contact <a href="mailto:covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov">covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov</a> for assistance.
InteliSwab <i>Point of Care or Over the Counter Testing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid antigen</li> <li>• Supplied by DOH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Rapid Antigen Toolkit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Translated consent forms</a></li> </ul>	Please order tests using the <a href="#">School Test Request Form</a> . If your school/district name is not listed on the dropdown menu, please contact <a href="mailto:covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov">covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov</a> for assistance.

## Staffing the Test Site

Only registered nurses (RN), RN-delegated staff, or RN-directed licensed practical nurses (LPNs) are permitted under state law to perform POC tests onsite.

There is less flexibility on who can perform testing because the Washington state standing order (that authorized non-medical staff to perform point-of-care testing) expired when the federal public health emergency ended on May 11, 2023.

RNs can delegate the administration of POC testing to non-medical school staff or direct LPNs to perform POC testing.

- The Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NCQAC) has released a letter that provides clarification around nursing practice authority in school settings for delegation and administration of COVID-19 tests: [Authority of Registered Nurses to Administer and Delegate COVID-19 CLIA-Waived Tests in School Settings](#).
- RNs interested in delegating POC testing to non-medical staff should follow guidance in the NCQAC [Advisory Opinion 15.01: Registered Nurse Delegation in School Settings: K-12 Grades, Public and Private](#).
- Questions about RN delegation to non-medical staff or RN direction to LPNs should be sent to the NCQAC at [NursingPractice@doh.wa.gov](mailto:NursingPractice@doh.wa.gov).

## Reporting Test Results

### SimpleReport Account Management

Schools should adhere to DOH and LHJ requirements when reporting test results. For the most updated guidance, please refer to the [COVID-19 Point-of-Care Test Reporting for K-12 Schools](#) page.

### SimpleReport Admin Login

#### Account Deactivation and/or Inactive Status

If you have not logged into SimpleReport in a while, you may need to reactivate user accounts to submit results.

SimpleReport deactivates users after 60 days if no one has logged in.

## Reactivation

The organization administrator can quickly reactive user accounts by following this [quick guide from SimpleReport](#), summarized below:

1. Click the gear icon at the top right corner of the page.
2. Find and click “Manage users.”
3. Find the user that needs to be reactivated and click the “Activate user” button on their profile. Confirm reactivation.

**Please note:** If the reactivated user doesn’t log in to SimpleReport before midnight on the day the account was reactivated, it will be deactivated again.

## Password Reset

Organization admins can reset passwords for staff or employees (users) by following these [steps from SimpleReport](#), summarized below:

1. Click the gear icon at the top right corner of the page.
2. Find and click “Manage users”.
3. Select Send password reset email and confirm.

If you don’t have admin privileges, talk to an admin about upgrading permissions on your account. (You can also [reset your own password](#).)

## Account Support

To request further assistance, including password recovery or reactivation of an inactive account, contact SimpleReport Support ([support@simplereport.gov](mailto:support@simplereport.gov), [simplerpt\\_support@cdc.gov](mailto:simplerpt_support@cdc.gov)) for guidance.



## Communicating with Students, Staff, and Community in Response to Outbreaks

Clear communication is a critical part of a successful school-based COVID-19 testing program. The following section outlines recommendations for school leaders when designing their communication strategy. In the event of multiple positive results, it will be important to identify who will inform staff members and who will manage communications to notify the parents/guardians of impacted students.

Keep in mind communication channels and audience to address the following points:

- How will parents/guardians be notified?
- Where will communication to parents/guardians be documented?
- Who will notify the LHJ? How will the LHJ be notified?
- Where will communication of this notification be documented?

When crafting communications, schools are encouraged to keep the following objectives in mind:

- Acknowledge the challenge, build confidence, calm anxieties.
- Reiterate why testing and in-person learning is important.
- Explain the specifics of how school-based COVID-19 testing will work and how they can find more information.
- Build awareness of the test supplies that are available to families and staff.
- Use clear and consistent messages from both the school district and local health jurisdiction.
- Schools and districts should always start by communicating with teachers and staff first, then families. Staff and families should hear updates directly from the school first but assume that your communications may be shared on social media or even with journalists.
- Assure families that testing is optional and based on parent/guardian consent.

## Touchpoints and Channels for School Testing

When questions from the school community arise, schools may find it helpful to work alongside their local health jurisdictions and ESD coordinators to ensure consistent messaging based on local guidelines, transmission levels, and needs. You can use multiple types of communications to reach your community:

- **Email newsletter:** Make it skimmable with a clear and descriptive subject line that directs readers to the most important information first.
- **Social media:** Share important information and link to more helpful details. Use images to draw attention to posts. Engage with parents and teachers who are active in Facebook groups or on Twitter.
- **Website:** Update regularly with the most important information up front. Link to state and local health jurisdictions (such as your county public health department).
- **Printed handouts and mail:** Make them skimmable and use pictures or icons to break up text and draw attention to the most important details.
- **Parent-teacher-student association and school community meetings:** Be prepared to answer questions, and bring a printed handout or provide a link to a webpage where people can find more detailed information.

## Messaging Approach

Keep audience needs and concerns in mind during communications. Most are not experts in science or public health. People have heard conflicting information. Some may not think COVID-19 mitigation is relevant and it will help to focus on the benefits of success — academic, social, emotional, and economic. In your messaging style and approach, consider and factor in cultural differences and literacy (health literacy, English literacy, and so on).

Empower people with clear choices and actions that they can take: symptom checks, getting tested, cooperating with contact tracers (to help identify other persons at risk of infection and asymptomatic transmission), masking or distancing, and faithfully staying isolated or quarantined when necessary. Taking these actions is a matter of core values — care, community, loyalty, preventing harm, and protecting both self and others.



## Key Themes for Communications

Schools can refine and customize the talking points below to their county and district. These talking points can likely be adapted for other respiratory viruses, including but not limited to flu and RSV.

- We believe that safe, in-person learning is a priority. It's beneficial for students to be with their community. Their learning and socialization is crucial as they grow.
- COVID-19 testing is available to you at [include location, details, and instructions]. Our hope is to contain the COVID-19 as much as possible, protect our communities, and keep students and teachers healthy and safe.
- All our decisions and protocols are fact-based and built on the most updated science. No solution is perfect, and we will adapt as needed depending on the level of COVID-19 transmission.
- We know that the public health guidance has changed as officials learn more, and we will be open and honest with you about what we're learning and any adjustments that might result from new information.
- Our goal is to put the best possible protocols in place so that our teachers, staff, students, and families feel safe, protected, and comfortable.

## Conclusion

A safe environment is paramount to student learning. And while there is no iron-clad way to guarantee COVID-19 doesn't touch a school, layered prevention and mitigation strategies do work. Testing is an integral strategy to keep students and staff in the classroom so that they can learn and grow together. Testing allows school the peace of mind that if and when COVID-19 knocks on the door, there's a plan in place to quickly confirm exposures and connect to next steps.

## Appendix 1: Project Management Guide for Implementing School-based COVID-19 Testing

### STEP 1: Confirm testing strategy, download toolkit(s)

- Identify members of the testing team [e.g., school leadership, union leadership, school nurse, facilities, communications personnel, parent-teacher association (PTA) representative, or school board representative].
- Review the “School COVID-19 Testing Vendor Resources” table (see [page 9](#) in this Playbook) as a team to orient the team to the types of decisions on (testing strategy, testing technology that best fits your needs, testing site location and delivery methods, and staff).
- Notify local health district of your plans, confirm if they can provide any support or guidance
- See the “School COVID-19 Testing Vendor Resources” section on [page 9](#) for toolkits for your chosen test technology

### STEP 2: Apply for MTS (CLIA Waiver) if point-of-care testing is included in testing strategy

- Schools seeking a new MTS license should complete the Certificate of Waiver Medical Test Site (MTS) Application Packet.

(See [page 6](#) for more details.)

### STEP 3: Order test kits

- Schools or districts can order supplies via the [School Test Request Form \(smartsheet.com\)](#).

(See [page 4](#) for instructions on ordering.)

### STEP 4: Communicate testing plan and collect parent consent

- Develop communication plan and key messages
  - o Create a separate committee if needed
  - o Ensure enough lead time for translating materials
  - o Consider access channels, language, literacy, cultural humility, community interest, emotions, and values

(See [pages 12-15](#) for more information on building a communications strategy.)



## **STEP 5: Staffing**

- Only registered nurses (RN), RN-delegated staff, or RN-directed licensed practical nurses (LPNs) are permitted under state law to perform POC tests onsite. (See [page 10](#) for more details.)

## **STEP 6: Receive Test Kits and Perform Quality Control**

- In tandem with receiving test kits and performing quality controls collect any additional supplies needed to run a testing site (e.g., tents/canopies, sandwich boards for signage, cones, traffic control vests, PPE, laptop, tables, chairs, bins, comfort items)

## **STEP 7: Launch Testing**

- Print and post signage if necessary
- Announce site is open and allow sign-ups for testing

## **STEP 8: Ongoing Reporting**

- Track results and key metrics. (See [page 10](#) for more details.)



## Appendix 2: Supply Inventory Management Template

When documenting supply inventory, it's important to include:

- Type of test
- Brand name
- Quantity
- Storage location
- Lot number (optional)
- Current expiration date (optional) or extended expiration date if applicable

Type	Brand Name	Quantity	Storage Location	Lot Number (Optional)	Current Expiration Date	Notes (Optional)
(OTC)	(iHealth)	(180)	(Second Floor Supply Room)	(12345)	(8/3/22)	(Expiration updated 5/1)
(OTC)	(iHealth)	(400)	(Second Floor Supply Room)	(23456)	(10/1/22)	(Expiration updated 5/1)
(POC)	(BD Veritor)	(50)	(Room 123)	(99999)	(9/31/22)	(Expiration updated 5/1)
(POC)	(BD Veritor Analyzer)	(5)	(Room 123)	(N/A)	(N/A)	(Expiration updated 5/1)

## Appendix 3: Testing Supplies List

### List of Testing Supplies

- Test
- Test Analyzer (if relevant)

### List of Potential Non-Testing Supplies

- PPE
- Hand sanitizer
- Disinfecting Wipes
- Gloves
- Masks
- Glasses
- Face Shields
- Gowns
- Process/Consumable/Support Items
- Pens
- Paper
- Clipboards
- First aid kit
- Tissues
- Trash bins
- Tables
- Chairs
- Computers and Tablets
- Printers
- Tents and Canopies
- Traffic Cones and Traffic Control Vests
- Hand-outs
- Signage
- Sandwich Boards
- Storyboards

## Appendix 4: Example POC Testing Announcement Letter

**NOTE:** This template is intended for use by school districts to communicate details about their point of care testing program to their school communities.

### COVID-19 Testing Available to Our School Community

[Name of school or district] is excited to partner with the Washington State Department of Health to offer free point of care COVID-19 testing at [school district name or acronym] this year. This program provides students, staff, and families with quick and highly accurate COVID-19 testing as symptoms arise or following known exposure.

Diagnostic testing is voluntary, free, painless, and private:

- Families voluntarily opt-in to testing (although we strongly encourage full participation)
- Testing is free; there is no out-of-pocket costs or co-pay for families or schools
- Samples are collected with a quick and painless shallow nasal swab (not the dreaded “brain tickler”)
- All health information is kept private and protected

School-based testing for COVID-19 is a proven strategy for minimizing transmission of the disease and maximizing in-person learning time. Masks, testing, and other safety strategies are essential for safe and sustainable in-person learning this year until vaccinations, for all ages, reach critical levels. Our COVID-19 testing program is one more way we are limiting the spread of COVID-19 in our schools and communities.

### Testing is Voluntary

- Families opt-in to the testing program.
- Access to community testing sites is variable, and in some areas, it is increasingly difficult to find a nearby testing site. While entirely voluntary, school-based testing shortens the length of time between sample collection and results while reducing the burden on families to arrange for a test.
- Getting tested at your school building is just one more resource for your family – you can still choose to get tested by your doctor or at a community test site.

## Testing is Free

- There is no out-of-pocket cost or co-pay for schools or families.

## Testing is Painless

- Samples can even be self-collected by the individual.
- This is not the dreaded “brain tickler” or nasopharyngeal swab. The shallow nasal swab enters the nose to gentle resistance, about half-an-inch into each nostril, makes several rotations, and is placed, swab-side down, into a collection tube.

## Testing is Private

- With regards to patient privacy, it’s no different than getting tested at your doctor’s office.
- All health information for the participant is kept private and is protected under federal HIPAA regulations (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act). Our contact tracers will be alerted if there is a positive test result so they can immediately start contact tracing and outbreak mitigation procedures.

## Testing is Quick and Highly Accurate

Samples are collected by a RN and/or a trained [name of school district] employee or volunteer to whom the RN has delegated this task. Rapid antigen tests are processed on-site by the testing observer. Results are reported back to the observer within 15 minutes at which time the student and their parent/guardian is notified of the result and appropriate quarantine and contact tracing protocols can be initiated. Testing can help reduce time away from school and the number of students who are required to quarantine by quickly identifying and isolating infected individuals.

## Learn More About Testing

Families and students can visit the [School Testing page on the DOH website](#) to find out more about testing programs, vendors, and what to expect when getting a diagnostic test.

