

COVID-19 Testing

On this page...

1. [COVID-19 Random Surveillance Testing in Schools](#)
2. [Monitoring Student Consent in ATS](#)
3. [Courtesy Staff Testing](#)
4. [Testing Operational Overview](#)
5. [Understanding the Randomized List/Roster \(RCOV\) and Thresholds](#)
6. [At-Home Rapid Test Kits for Students and Staff](#)
7. [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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COVID-19 Random Surveillance Testing in Schools

The City's routine COVID-19 random surveillance testing program provides weekly COVID-19 testing, in school buildings, for students who have opted into the program by submitting consent. Routine testing provides the community with an accurate representation of the prevalence of COVID-19 and is part of a multi-pronged strategy to help keep schools stay safe.

Beginning January 3, the in-school surveillance testing program will expand, doubling the number of students tested at each school and including both vaccinated and unvaccinated students.

Every school will randomly test a sample of students who have submitted consent for testing. All students in grade 1 and up who submit consent can participate, regardless of their vaccination status. (Pre-K and Kindergarten students are excluded from in-school testing).

Please encourage all families, regardless of whether their young person is vaccinated, to consent to in-school testing.

Families can:

- Complete the online form in their [NYC Schools Account](#)(Open external link) or
- Return a signed paper form to the school. Forms and translations can be found on the [family-facing site](#)(Open external link).

The testing program is voluntary. As such, there is no process for requesting an exemption. Families that feel their child cannot participate in testing may choose not to return the consent form for 2021-22.

Monitoring Student Consent in ATS

If you have not done so already, please designate a staff member to track completion of the updated consent forms. For general guidance on student testing, see the [COVID-19 Testing for Students wiki page](#)(Open external link).

- Entering Student Consent in ATS: Once the Student Testing Consent form from 2021-22 is reviewed by the family, signed, and returned, you should enter this information in ATS. For students who have consented, please enter Y. You should use either the:
 - [Biographical Individual Student Indicator Update \(BINU\)](#)(Open external link) for individual students
 - [Update Student Indicators \(UPSI\)](#)(Open external link) for multiple students
- Monitoring Consent in ATS: Staff with access can download the [COVID Testing Consent/Audit report \(RHCV\)](#)(Open external link) to view a full audit report of all students' consent to test for the current school year. The report contains
 - The latest testing consent information for each student
 - The source (whether consent was given by a paper form/ATS or NYCSA)
 - The last date the information was changed/updated
 - Additional key data points
- Accessing Randomized Testing Rosters in ATS: School-based staff can download their Random COVID-19 testing roster using the [COVID Testing Report \(RCOV\)](#)(Open external link). Please

note that the data in the ATS report is not updated in real-time; there is a lag of one business day.

Courtesy Staff Testing

Testing will be made available to DOE staff whenever schedule and capacity permit. Testing providers are bound by test capacity and the time scheduled and may not always be able to test all interested staff. However, all staff are now guaranteed an at-home rapid test kit each week in January, and each kit contains two rapid tests. These at-home rapid test kits will be distributed to schools prior to January 3.

Staff courtesy testing is not subject to randomization, and staff are not included on the [RCOV\(Open external link\)](#) student testing roster. The principal may determine how staff are selected and should choose a method that works best for their school. Staff must consent to test, and they are encouraged to submit consent proactively in the DOE's [Health Screening application\(Open external link\)](#) to minimize testing time.

Testing Operational Overview

Schools will be contacted by a member of the Test & Trace COVID Random testing team in advance of their scheduled testing date to discuss logistics.

Please note the following:

- Testing will occur every week.
- DOE will calculate and communicate the 20% threshold to programs and NYC Test+ Trace (T2). T2 will communicate threshold to lab testing provider.
- The day of the week on which your program is tested can change week to week.
- All programs co-located in the same building will be tested on the same day, preferably in the same location within the building. (This does not apply to co-located Charter schools.)
- There will be no separate testing for PSAL students.

Pre-Testing

- Confirm school-specific logistics and testing needs. For staffing, you may wish to consider utilizing the following:
 - Custodian and Custodial Team - Identify space with principal/principal designee/ Prepare space and disinfect area.
 - Pupil Accounting Secretary or Payroll Secretary - Responsible for student consent forms and entry into the ATS system (students) and Health Screener (adults) input
 - Principal Designee / COVID Testing Point - Supervise, manage, and support the random COVID testing
 - Teacher/ Coach - Chaperone/ Support/Lead
 - Parent Coordinator - Chaperone/ Support student consent forms/ Lead
 - Paraprofessional - Chaperone/ Support
 - Community Associate - Chaperone/ Support
 - School Aide- Chaperone/ Support/ ATS data entry
 - Guidance Counselor, Social Worker, Family Worker - Chaperone/Social Emotional Support/ATS data entry
 - Medical Assistant (DOE) - Chaperone/Support/ATS data entry
- You should identify a classroom/space within the building with a window that opens. The space cannot be a medical room/School-based Health Center. The space should be large enough to test 15-20 students/staff per hour safely. In addition:
 - Each workstation needs a 10'x6' space to ensure social distancing. The number of workstations depends on anticipated volume at school/building; for most schools 1-2 stations is adequate.
 - Provide a table at least 6' in length to allow the testing team to setup laptop/iPad + swabbing station. Provide an extra table to hold supplies.
 - Please allocate four chairs per workstation and ensure there is at least 1 outlet per workstation.
 - The room must have a garbage can, space for at least seven students or staff to queue up outside the workstation area

- while they wait, and an ability to connect to the school's WiFi and/or strong cell signal.
- After testing, the room should not be used until cleaned by custodial staff.
- Review your students' consent for testing in ATS using [RHCV\(Open external link\)](#) in ATS.
- Before test day, you should expect:
 - To be notified at least one week prior to their test day of their scheduled test date, and to communicate with T2 to work through logistics, i.e., testing location within their school.
 - To have their testing date confirmed one day prior to their scheduled test date, with the backpack letter that should be sent home with students who are tested.
 - To have access to their [Roster \(RCOV\)\(Open external link\)](#), a randomized and ordered list of consented students to test on test day through ATS.
 - To have access to their target testing threshold for their school through the [COVID-19 School Testing SharePoint folder\(Open external link\)](#).
 - To communicate to T2 any testing inquiries through the COVID Testing [Escalation Form\(Open external link\)](#).

Testing Day

- On the testing day, Principals/Designee should:
 - Prepare their testing room (see testing room needs below)
 - Designate school staff to bring individual students to the COVID testing room and accompany students back to class.
 - Designate school staff to remain with students to provide support.
 - Implement pre-determined process to bring students to be tested at the identified testing location within the school.
 - Download their roster for testing using [RCOV\(Open external link\)](#). Use this randomized list to bring students to test.
 - Know their program/school testing threshold number. The testing threshold number will be updated weekly and available in the [COVID-19 School Testing SharePoint folder\(Open external link\)](#).

- Know the window of time the testing provider will be at the school conducting testing and plan to meet the testing threshold.
- After testing has occurred, staff should send home students with a [backpack letter](#) for their respective lab that confirms how students can access their test result.

Post-Testing

- Parents/Guardians will be notified of test results within 48-72 hours
- The Principal will be notified of any resulting quarantine orders via the Situation Room.

Understanding the Randomized List/Roster (RCOV) and Thresholds

- The Testing Order column indicates the order consented students should be tested. Each person has been assigned a “Testing Order Number.”
- This numerical order should be followed (starting with 1, followed by 2, 3, etc.), skipping any student not present in the building that day, until the testing threshold is reached.
- Weekly testing thresholds can be found on the [COVID-19 School Testing SharePoint folder](#)([Open external link](#)) and will be updated every Friday.
- If, for example, you have a testing threshold of 25 test, it is possible you will test staff or students whose “Testing Order Number” is higher than 25, if they are absent/unavailable.
- If there is a gap in testing order on the list, continue with the person with the next highest number.
- School staff should still confirm the most recent student consent data, checking for any consent changes (i.e., written revocation of consent) that may have been submitted to school staff on the morning of testing.
- As information changes from day-to-day, the Testing Order column will be updated. If consent is withdrawn there may be a gap in the Testing Order. If so, move to the next highest number in the Testing Order.

- For districts 1-32, randomized consent lists reflect all consented individuals assigned to a DBN, regardless of where that individual is assigned (i.e. different buildings).
- Randomized testing rosters will be provided weekly. Please be sure to confirm the date in the 'Testing Week' column when you're preparing for the current week's testing.
- Labs will NOT have access to student's randomized numbers, principal or principal's designee is responsible for identifying and referring for testing the randomized group.
- Patients, with a "Testing Order Number" within the testing threshold range, do not have to be tested in the ranked order of their "Testing Order Number." For example, person 3 can be tested before person 1 on the day of testing.
- Please minimize "walk-in" testing. Following the Testing Order of the COVID Testing Roster (RCOV) will help ensure you are using the pre-registration data already provided to the testing providers.

At-Home Rapid Test Kits for Students and Staff

As part of our multi-layered approach to keeping schools safe, all schools will be provided with a supply of at-home rapid test kits. Starting the week of December 27, 2021, free at-home rapid test kits will be shipped to DOE school buildings. **Schools should distribute these test kits to any students and staff who exhibit COVID-like symptoms or to students and staff who have been exposed to COVID-19 in a classroom setting.** Please customize and print these the following letters as needed:

- [Home Test Kit for Exposure](#)(Open external link)
- [Home Test Kit for Symptoms](#)(Open external link)

Distribution to Schools

- Free at-home rapid test kits will be distributed to all DOE schools; this will continue over the month of January.
- The number of test kits per school will be based on enrollment and number of staff. The custodian of a shared campus will receive the individual allocation for each school on the campus. Additional

information forthcoming regarding how schools may request to replenish their supply of tests.

Distribution to Students and Staff

- Test kits may be distributed to students and staff who exhibit COVID-like symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19 in a classroom setting. Principals may designate specific school staff, including school nurses, to have access and authority to distribute tests to students and staff.
- At-home rapid test kits should only be used at home and are not intended for use at schools. Schools should distribute tests by kit and should not open the test kits.
- Please distribute kits to any staff member or student who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 as well as to all staff and students in a class where a positive case is identified.

Individuals Experiencing Symptoms

- The individual experiencing symptoms should use both tests within 24 hours. The first test should be used immediately upon returning home, and the second test should be used 24 hours later. The individual must stay home until two negative home rapid test results have been received. The individual may return to school/work after two negative test results and if they are fever free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.

Individuals Exposed to COVID at School

- Students and staff who may have been exposed to COVID at school should be given a home test kit to take home. The individual should administer the first home on the day it is received and use the second test on Day 5.
- If an individual begins to show symptoms of COVID before Day 5, they should use the test kit immediately, treating themselves as a potential positive case and isolate. It is recommended that the individual also seek a PCR test.

- **Please note that this home testing program applies only to school exposures; it does NOT apply to individuals with household exposures.** Students and staff who are not fully vaccinated and experience an exposure outside of the classroom must still quarantine at home for 10 days. If those individuals obtain a lab-confirmed COVID-19 test result on or after Day 5 from exposure, they can return to school from quarantine on Day 8.

Testing Positive

- Anyone who tests positive, regardless of vaccine status, from a take home test should immediately report it to the school and begin isolating. Students who test positive must isolate for 10 days and can return to school on Day 11. No negative test is required to return to school. Staff members who test positive with an at-home rapid test kits should follow the DOE's policies. No negative test is required when returning to work.

Teachers School-Based Staff Returning from Isolation After Testing Positive

- Teachers and school-based staff who are considered fully vaccinated (two weeks have passed since the second dose of Moderna and Pfizer, or after the single dose of Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine) may return to work on Day 6 after testing positive for COVID-19 under the following conditions:
- A teacher/school-based staff member must be asymptomatic OR have mild symptoms only, such as
 - Being fever-free for 72 hours without the use of medication;
 - Not having a runny nose; and/or
 - Having a minimal cough only and cannot be coughing up phlegm.
- At work, from Day 6 through Day 10, the positive teacher/school-based staff member must consistently and correctly wear a well-fitting higher level face covering, such as a KN95 mask.
- Staff working under this policy must continue to stay at home, take precautions to avoid household transmission, and observe other

required elements of isolation while not at work until the end of the 10-day period.

For questions about at-home rapid test kits, please email stayinghealthy@schools.nyc.gov. (Open external link)

Frequently Asked Questions

Policy

Once a family gives consent for their student, how long is it in effect?

Consent forms for the 21-22 school year expire September 30, 2022, unless consent is withdrawn before then. Families can request to withdraw consent at any time.

What happens if I don't meet my threshold?

The threshold is a goal. You should aim to encourage as much participation from your families as possible. You should not test any non-eligible students or seek out staff to meet threshold.

The same students in my school are being tested each week. What can I do?

The way to increase the variability in your testing roster is to encourage more families to participate in the testing program. The larger the testing pool, the more variation you'll have in your testing roster each week. Ensure that all paper consents are entered into ATS, so they can be incorporated into the [RCOV](#) (Open external link) rosters. All students in grades 1 and up can participate in this program if their families have provided consent, regardless of vaccination status.

What is the policy for parents who refuse to allow their child to participate in random testing?

The testing program is voluntary. Parents who do not want their child to participate should not consent to testing for the school year.

Do testing providers need to show proof of vaccination at the door?

Yes, in accordance with the DOE visitor policy, all testing providers must show proof of vaccination to enter a DOE building.

What documents do I need on test day?

On test day you should be using your [RCOV\(Open external link\)](#) testing roster to bring students down to test. You do not need your [RHCV\(Open external link\)](#) report because the RCOV roster will only include consented/test-eligible students. You should also know your threshold for that week from the COVID sharepoint.

How do I give and revoke consent for in school testing?

Families may revoke consent at any time by notifying the school in writing. (Families are not able to revoke consent through NYCSA). Update their information in ATS immediately using [BINU\(Open external link\)](#).

What students are eligible for testing?

All students who are in grade 1 and up and who have consented to testing can participate, regardless of their vaccination status. Students in 3K, PK, and Kindergarten are not part of this program. You can view a list of every student in your school and their consent value using the [RHCV\(Open external link\)](#) report in ATS.

I don't have space to test at my school, can we test outside?

No. The DOE guidance on testing space requirements is detailed on the [COVID-19 Testing for Students page](#) on the Infohub.

Thresholds/Rosters

What is the difference between RHCV and RCOV?

The [RHCV\(Open external link\)](#) report contains every student in your school and their testing consent value. It can be used to track and monitor student consent.

The [RCOV\(Open external link\)](#) report is a Testing Roster. It contains a randomized list of students who are being tested on a given day.

I have a building with an annex. Is my threshold for each building or both?

Multi-sited D1-32 schools receive one threshold calculation. The same threshold is applied to all sites.

Is it possible to have a separate threshold for my two separate buildings?

If your school has annexes or multiple sites, you have the option to update your school's official class data in ATS in order to receive separate threshold calculations and weekly COVID-testing rosters organized by building/site. To do so, you may indicate that students associated with an Official Class are present in a secondary building/site using the [CMOD function\(Open external link\)](#) in ATS to update the physical location on your official class records. If you make this data update in ATS, we can identify students in each of your buildings/sites to be assigned to your weekly COVID-testing thresholds and rosters. As a reminder, you can use the [RACL function\(Open external link\)](#) in ATS to review your Official Class information list.

Why don't I see all my consented students on my RCOV roster?

[RCOV\(Open external link\)](#) rosters only include testing-eligible students which means that any students who meet these criteria are not included:

- The student did not provide consent for testing or
- The student was not selected for testing or
- The student is not in grade 1 or above.

Why is my list in the same order every week?

Please be sure you are using the [RCOV\(Open external link\)](#) roster. The roster will have a new randomized testing order each week.

Testing Operations

What should we do if a non-consented student is tested?

- If you believe a non-consented student was tested, please notify the following:
- [COVID-19 DOE Inbox](#)
- [T2 escalation page](#)(Open external link)
- Your school superintendent

How do staff/students receive their testing results?

Patients tested during school surveillance testing or courtesy testing will receive their test results directly from the testing provider within 48-72 hours. Student results will be communicated to their parent's email address or phone number in ATS.

All providers have a “backpack letter” that details the process for getting test results and contact information in the event that someone does not receive their results directly.

Why are the testing teams manually entering information on testing day?

The testing team receives data in advance of testing day. This information will match the information in the [RCOV](#)(Open external link) report. Please make sure all paper consent forms are entered into ATS 2 days before testing day.

The information manually entered by the provider on testing day into their system does not populate into ATS. You will still need to enter all student paper consent form into ATS for that student to be incorporated into the [RCOV](#)(Open external link) roster on future test days.

The provider doesn't have information for a student I know is consented, can they be tested?

Confirming that a student is consented is very important.

The provider must have specific data points in order to confirm that a student is consented for testing, and so the student's parent will get the student's test result. You need to be prepared to provide any required information for any student not in the provider's data.

If the student is newly consented, please make sure the student's paper consent form is entered correctly in ATS, so manual entry is not needed on the next testing day. You can use RHCV to audit this data.

Why didn't I receive any notice about testing?

The school should contact their assigned Logistics Coordinator or submit an escalation on the escalation page to inform the T2 Testing Team of any changes to who should be receiving notification emails.

Testing Process

Who will do the testing?

A trained individual will conduct the test. Testing will be provided by our partners: BioReference Laboratories, Fulgent Genetics, MedRite, and Somos Healthcare.

How will the testing work?

The testing provider will set up in a designated area in the school. Staff from the school will visit the appropriate classroom to retrieve students from that class who have been selected to be tested that day; those students will be escorted to the testing area, tested quickly, and then escorted back to their classroom.

What test will be used? Is it painful?

The test will use a "short swab" (similar to a Q-tip) that is inserted into the front part of the nose for five to ten seconds. We understand that some students may be nervous about testing, but the test is not

painful and should not be uncomfortable for your child. The test should take no more than two minutes from start to finish.

Are students escorted to the testing area in a group or one-by-one? Will more than one student be waiting in an area to be tested?

Students will be escorted with any members of their class who are also being tested. Social distancing will be maintained at all times. Face coverings will be worn at all times, except for the very short period when a student must remove their covering to allow for collection of the test specimen.

Can parents accompany their children to be tested?

Unfortunately, no. To reduce the risk of COVID-19 being introduced into the building, parents will not be able to accompany their children during the test.

How long is the testing process expected to take?

The cotton swab is in the nose for five to ten seconds, so the entire process of explaining the test to the child and then swabbing them generally takes only minutes.

What if a student is not comfortable communicating in English? Will interpreters be available to explain the process to students who are multilingual learners? If so, how will this be arranged?

Every testing partner will have policies and procedures for how they provide services to individuals in their preferred language.

Test Results

When will results be available?

Results will be available within 48-72 hours after the sample is taken.

When will families receive results?

In most instances, parents/guardians will receive results no more than 48 hours after the specimen arrives at the laboratory. Depending on the provider testing at your school, parents may receive a phone call, text message, email or maybe able to log into an online portal to access your child's results. If a student tests positive, families will also receive a call from the provider who completed the testing.

What happens to the testing specimen?

The process works exactly the same as if you went to your regular doctor and had a blood test or a COVID-19 test—all information and any collected specimens are handled exactly the same way. The laboratory partners we work with use specimens for no other purpose than COVID-19 testing, and each specimen is destroyed as soon as a COVID-19 clinical result is successfully issued. In all cases, our partners operate under strict privacy and confidentiality protocols.

Where and how will test results be stored?

Results will be sent to two places: to the State and City Departments of Health, where all communicable disease results are sent; and to the Test & Trace Corps and associated City staff to facilitate closing of classrooms or school buildings and to support contact tracing as necessary to ensure we protect all students, staff, and family members. These entities operate under strict privacy and confidentiality protocols.