

K-12 COVID-19 Testing Guidance and Eligibility Requirements 2022-2023 School Year

BACKGROUND:

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) received an \$803 million ELC Reopening Schools Grant from the federal government in 2021 to support school-based COVID-19 testing activities intended to support the reopening of schools for in-person K-12 instruction. In addition, DSHS partnered with TEA to provide these resources to Texas K-12 public and private school systems to support items or activities to implement prevention and mitigation strategies necessary to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

Reopening Schools Grant	
<p>SY 2022-2023 K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program: Provides school-based COVID-19 testing activities through the work of six approved vendors which provide eligible public and private school systems with access to COVID-19 tests (rapid antigen & PCR) & staffing support to assist in administering tests.</p>	<p>School Health Support Grant: Provides eligible K-12 public and private school systems with access to needed funds to further support COVID mitigation/prevention resources and activities.</p>

The CDC has decided to exercise expanded authority to permit the extension of these funds for one full year until July 31, 2023. This extension of the grant funds allows for the continuity of current school testing activities and ensures flexibility to ramp up testing when community levels of COVID increase.

Carefully read the considerations and requirements below before choosing to opt into the [SY 2022-2023 K-12 Testing Project](#) and the [SY 2022-2023 School Health Support Grant](#). School Systems that decide to apply for the School Health Support Grant must confirm that they are implementing a multi-tiered testing approach/method throughout the 2022-2023 school year. To comply with the federal grant, adherence to the requirements is non-negotiable.

REQUIRED NOTICE:

This K-12 COVID-19 Testing Project is supported by the CDC of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a grant award totaling \$803M with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit the Centers for Disease Control Website.

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APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY:

1. Any public or private K-12 school system interested in participating in this program **must complete** the [new application process](#) regardless of if they previously opted into the state’s COVID testing programs.
2. School systems must implement a multi-tiered testing program to participate in **the Reopening Schools Grant (SY 2022-2023 K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program & School Health Support Grant)**.
3. Pre-K/daycare students that are part of school systems are eligible for this program also, even if they do not share a campus or co-mingle with K-12 students.”
4. Public & private school systems that participated in the SY2021-2022 Reopening Schools Grant must have completed all the [closeout activities](#) to be eligible to apply for SY2022-2023 Reopening Schools Grant.
5. The City of Houston also received funds through the same federal grant program to support a [set of public and private school systems](#) within the City of Houston boundaries. If you are in the Houston area, please [review the list of school systems](#); the City of Houston will support and determine if you are eligible for their program. If so, once you apply, you will receive an allocation from the City of Houston to use throughout SY 2022-2023 in TEA’s program for rapid antigen tests only. In addition, the City of Houston will provide PCR tests and staffing support directly through its program.
6. All eligible school systems must adhere to the ***SY2022-2023 K-12 COVID-19 Testing Guidance and Eligibility Requirements*** (this document) if they apply and participate.

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. School systems are required to implement a multi-tiered testing program.
 - ***Screening testing is no longer required under this program; however, screening testing may still be advisable in certain circumstances and may be supported by these resources. Recipients with existing plans in place that include screening testing do not need to halt these activities if they have demonstrated utility within the jurisdiction.***
2. The school system must opt into the SY 2022-2023 [K-12 COVID Testing Project](#).
3. Each school system will need to identify one test coordinator, one alternative test coordinator, and a superintendent/district official to serve as the primary points of contact for DSHS and TEA. School systems are responsible for contacting TEA if the identified individuals change throughout the school year.
4. School systems can select from the [state-approved testing vendor\(s\)](#) that align with their local needs.
5. Participating school systems must review and adhere to all the information provided in the ***SY2022-2023 K-12 COVID-19 Testing Guidance and Eligibility Requirements*** (this document).
6. School systems will be eligible to receive a funding allotment. As school systems apply, TEA will update the posted allocation spreadsheet within the Public Health Order Card with their allocation amounts weekly.
7. School systems must ensure they have the appropriate temperature-controlled space to store any COVID-19 tests they opt to receive and administer at the local level.
8. School systems are required to be vigilant and responsible stewards of public grant funds and provided services.

TESTING REQUIREMENTS:

School systems that choose to participate in the **Reopening Schools Grant (SY 2022-2023 K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program & School Health Support Grant)** must develop a plan for and implement a multi-tiered testing approach that may utilize screening, diagnostic, or surveillance testing. See the [CDC COVID-19 K-12 Guidance Document](#) for additional information on COVID-19 testing.

According to the CDC:

Types of COVID Testing	Explanation
Screening Testing	Intended to identify people with COVID-19 who do not have symptoms or known or suspected exposures, so that steps can be taken to prevent further spread of COVID-19.
Diagnostic Testing	Intended to identify current infection in individuals and is performed when a person has signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or is asymptomatic, but has recent known or suspected exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection.
Surveillance Testing	Intended to monitor the population-level burden of disease, or to characterize the incidence and prevalence of the disease. Surveillance testing is primarily used to gain information at a population level, rather than an individual level, and generally involves testing of de-identified specimens. Surveillance testing results are not reported back to the individual. As such, surveillance testing cannot be used for an individual’s healthcare decision-making or individual public health actions, such as isolation.

Note: Per grant requirements, diagnostic testing is only allowed when students or staff who are already at school become symptomatic. Individuals who are sick must not come to school to be tested and should instead be referred to their primary care physician or a medical clinic/community testing site.

Multi-tiered Testing Plan:

- **COVID-19 Community Levels**
 - The CDC launched [COVID-19 Community Levels](#), a new tool for helping people and communities decide on [prevention steps](#) based on the latest data. There are three levels (**low**, **medium**, and **high**), which are determined by looking at hospital beds being used by patients with COVID-19, new hospital admissions among people with COVID-19, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in your area. It’s easy to check your county’s level on [CDC’s website](#) and find out what actions should be taken.

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<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines Get tested if you have symptoms Low frequency of COVID-19 testing (consenting staff and students with current consent forms on file) i.e., monthly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines Get tested if you have symptoms Medium frequency of COVID-19 testing (consenting staff and students with current consent forms on file) i.e., bi-weekly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear a mask indoors in public Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines Get tested if you have symptoms Additional precautions may be needed for people at high risk for severe illness High frequency of COVID-19 testing (consenting staff and students with current consent forms on file) i.e., weekly.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS*:

School systems must follow all reporting requirements outlined below to adhere to the federally funded CDC grant requirements. **Failure to submit timely and accurate reports will result in removal from the testing program.**

1. **Tests and Services Received Report must be submitted within 48 hours (2 business days) of:**

- Receiving ordered tests;
- The last day of consecutive staffing services. If staff are on-site Monday — Friday, the form must be submitted by close of business the following Monday
- [Test and Services Received Full Instructions](#)

Example	Testing Days	Must Report By End of Day
1.	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday	Friday
2.	Monday - Friday (all week)	Monday the following week
3.	Monday & Wednesday	Wednesday and Friday

2. **Test Administered and Results Reporting:**

For all tests administered:

- School systems must submit testing results (number of tests administered, excluded, and positives) to the vendor through the vendors’ web-based portal for all tests conducted by close of business on Friday; however, TEA and DSHS recommends 24 hours after the end of the testing day as a best practice.

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- School systems that choose to work with multiple vendors are responsible for submitting COVID test results in each of the selected vendor's online reporting portal.

For Positive Tests:

- All school systems must notify their local public health authority of positive COVID cases.

3. Grant Programmatic Surveys & Additional Reports/Submission

4. School systems must respond to any additional data collection survey and/or report requests to remain in compliance (i.e., the [End of Year Inventory Report](#)).

***Failure to comply with the reporting requirements of the grant may lead to a delay in receiving future tests, a freeze on your allocation, or removal from the testing program altogether.**

2021-2022 TESTING PROGRAM CARRYOVER:

The following section only applies to school systems that participated in the 2021-2022 COVID Testing Program. These school systems will fall into one of the following categories as they apply for the 2022-2023 COVID Testing Program:

1. **School systems that were part of the SY2021-2022 COVID-19 Testing program have used all of their COVID tests and are in good standing with all the reporting requirements.** These school systems have full access to their order allocation and vendor staffing services (pending application approval).
2. **School systems that were part of the SY2021-2022 COVID-19 Testing program have not used all their COVID tests, but the amount (cost) of their COVID tests remaining in stock does not exceed the max ordering allocation amount for SY2022-2023 and are in good standing with prior year reporting requirements.** These school systems can order the difference in COVID tests and utilize vendor staffing services (pending application approval).
3. **School systems with more COVID tests in stock than TEA/DSHS would have been provided to start SY2022-2023 and are in good standing with the previous year's reporting requirements.** These school systems cannot order COVID tests but can utilize vendor staffing services (pending application approval).
4. **School systems not in good standing with SY2021-2022 reporting requirements** are NOT permitted to order COVID tests nor utilize staffing services until the outstanding reports are submitted accurately. Please get in touch with COVIDCase@tea.texas.gov for additional support.

Good Standing School Systems: School systems that have accurately submitted all their closeout reports for SY2021-2022, which include the following reports:

1. [Tests & Services Received Report \(TSSR\)](#)
2. [Vendor Staffing Reports](#) — only for school systems that utilized vendor staffing
3. [Inventory Close Out Survey](#) — the numbers submitted in the report need to reconcile with the data that DSHS has on file; school systems need to work with their vendors and then DSHS to ensure complete reconciliation
4. Outside Vendor Reports — only for school systems that indicated working with outside vendors on the [School Health Support Grant](#).

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ALLOCATIONS AND HOLDS:

Allocation Planning

The K-12 Testing Program was created to support a multi-tiered testing approach in school systems across the state. Schools must have a multi-tiered testing plan that supports their district's needs. Schools must only order what they intend to use in a month. Last year, on average, school systems tested 3% of their total district population each month. School leaders and testing coordinators can review [the public school systems allocation sheet](#) and [the private school systems allocation sheet](#) (*this list will be updated weekly throughout SY2022-2023*).

Initial Order

Once an initial order is placed and received, no further orders will be allowed until a minimum of **80% of the current testing supply has been reported as used through results reporting.**

Holds

To adhere to the CDC grant's requirements and ensure proper federal funds' spending, it may be necessary for TEA and DSHS to place holds on school systems. These holds are not necessarily punitive but a way for the state agencies and school systems to better monitor spending and equitable usage of the grant funds.

Type of Hold	Cause for Hold	Clearing the Hold
Tests and Services Received Report (TSRR) Hold*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The school system failed to report the receipt of tests or staffing services within the required reporting window or Reported information did not match the vendor-supplied information 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Submit the required TSRR form. Email COVIDCaseReport@tea.texas.gov
Reporting Hold	The school system has placed an order and has not reported using at least 80% of those tests.	The Reporting Hold will automatically be removed once the school system has reported using at least 80% of its current stock.
Staffing Hold	If it is determined that school systems are not adjusting staffing requests based on testing demand, the school system will be put on a staffing hold and unable to utilize the vendor's staff until resolved.	Email COVIDCaseReport@tea.texas.gov to schedule a staffing meeting.
Carryover	The school system has sufficient tests from the SY 2021-2022 Testing Program to cover their current need, so they will not be permitted to order new COVID tests.	Email COVIDCaseReport@tea.texas.gov if you have questions or need support.

Staffing:

The K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program allows school systems to utilize vendor staffing services to support a multi-tiered testing approach/method at the local level. School systems that use staffing services from vendors must agree to the following monitoring and reporting expectations.

Staffing Expectations

School systems must:

1. Apply for staffing services on the [SY2022-2023 K-12 COVID-19 Testing Application](#) and attend the required webinar.
2. Have a tiered plan for how they will adjust staffing needs based on local COVID positivity and transmission rates.
3. Daily, properly log and monitor the date, time, staff member, and total number of hours of vendor staff utilizing the [K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program Staff Log Template](#) (a link for this template will be added after July 25, 2022).
4. Utilize staff for the entirety of the minimum number of hours.

Reporting Staff Hours

[Tests and Services Received Report](#) must be submitted 48 hours after the last day of consecutive staffing services. If staff are on-site Monday - Friday, the form must be submitted by close of business the following Monday (see diagram below)

Example	Testing Days	Must Report By End of Day
1.	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday	Friday
2.	Monday - Friday (all week)	Monday the following week
3.	Monday & Wednesday	Wednesday and Friday

Required Staffing Webinar

All school systems utilizing staffing services through one of the [K-12 approved testing vendors](#) must attend a required staffing webinar. These webinars are listed below. You will also receive a separate email with the dates of the required webinars.

See the list of webinars on the [SY2022-2023 COVID-19 Testing Program website](#).

- TEA will schedule a required vendor staffing informational webinar, which will be offered weekly starting Thursday, July 28, and they will run for eight weeks and then will continue on an as-needed basis. School systems are only required to attend the training once, and then they will be allowed to order vendor staffing support.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES:

- K-12 COVID-19 Step by Step Guide (Posted in July 2022)
- Program Overview Webinar (Held and posted by August 5)
- Staffing Overview Webinar
- [K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program Application](#)
- [Vendor Information Sheet](#)
- [TEA K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program Website](#), which includes:
 - Vendor Webinars
 - Testing Allocations (this list will begin being posted on July 25, 2022)
 - Frequently Asked Questions (this document will be posted by July 25, 2022)

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We recommend you review the K-12 COVID-19 Testing Project FAQ within the [Public Health Orders Card](#) on TEA's COVID-19 website. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact covidcasereport@tea.texas.gov.