

Montgomery County Office of Public Health (MCOPH)

Test to Stay Guidance for K-12 School Entities

Test to Stay (TTS) is a COVID-19 prevention strategy that allows individuals who are identified as a close contact to a case of COVID-19 to continue to attend school and participate in extra-curricular activities in modified quarantine for 7 days after the last day of exposure. TTS is utilized for individuals that would be required to quarantine if exposed. This includes individuals who are unvaccinated or who are partially vaccinated **and** asymptomatic. To participate in TTS, individuals will need to opt in to completing an antigen testing cadence for COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2 virus) , remain symptom free and test negative to be able to remain in school and participate in extra-curricular activities over their 7 day quarantine period. Close contacts who test positive are directed to isolate. Those who do not participate in TTS will be required to quarantine 7 or 10 days in accordance with standard requirements from PADOH.

<p>Promotion of COVID-19 Vaccinations</p>	<p>Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection. A growing body of evidence suggests that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are less likely to have a symptomatic infection or transmit COVID-19 to others than people who are not fully vaccinated.</p>
<p>Definitions</p>	<p>Isolation: Separation of an individual infected with COVID-19 from those who are not infected. An individual with COVID-19 should isolate for 10 days beginning when the start of symptoms first appear. Isolation can end after 10 days if an individual has had no fever for 24 hours (without fever reducing medications) and symptoms have improved. If an individual with COVID-19 is not having symptoms, they should isolate for 10 days from the date the specimen was collected of the positive test. For isolation requirements see MCOPH COVID-19 School Exclusion Chart.</p> <p>Close Contact: Individual within 6 feet of a COVID-19 case for 15 consecutive minutes. <i>Exemption:</i> In the K-12 indoor classroom setting or a structured outdoor setting where mask use can be observed, the close contact definition excludes students only who were between 3 to 6 feet away from an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or clinically compatible illness where both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks). For guidance on close contacts see MCOPH COVID-19 School Exclusion Chart.</p> <p>Standard Quarantine: Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent the spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from MCOPH. Quarantine is complete:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 10 days without testing OR • After day 7 after receiving a negative test result (test must occur on day 5 or later) <p>For quarantine requirements see MCOPH COVID-19 School Exclusion Chart.</p> <p>Partially Vaccinated: For two-dose vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), you're considered “partially vaccinated” if you've received just one dose or if two weeks haven't yet passed since your second dose.</p> <p>Fully Vaccinated: a two-dose course of the Moderna or Pfizer COVID vaccines, or a one-and-done Johnson & Johnson shot</p> <p>School Setting: Includes both classroom and non-classroom settings (e.g., school bus, hallway, lunchroom, etc.). For the purposes of defining close contacts, the school setting refers to exposures during the regular school day including sports or other extra-curricular activities, before or after school childcare programs, or school sanctioned activity.</p> <p>CLIA Certified Point of Care (POC) Antigen Test: CLIA Certified Point of Care (POC) Antigen Testing is antigen testing perform under an oversight laboratory using their CLIA certificate. This includes Project ACE-IT, Physicians’ Offices, Urgent Care facilities, and pharmacies. At-home antigen testing is not accepted as CLIA Certified POC antigen testing.</p> <p>High-Risk Activities: Activities which increased exhalation of respiratory fluids occurs, such as activities that involve physical exertion or raises their voice (sports, singing, shouting, band, or exercise). Consideration should also be taking into account when these activities occur in enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation.</p>
<p>School/ District Eligibility Requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolled in Project ACE-IT or alternate antigen testing program. • School/ District Health and Safety Plan that recommends a Universal Masking Policy. • Updated School/District Health and Safety plans to include TTS. • School/District TTS implementation plan submitted and approved by MCOPH prior to start of TTS. • System to report positive COVID-19 cases and close contacts to MCOPH, this can include utilizing MCOPH COVID-19 School Electronic reporting system or an alternative method approved by MCOPH. • Continue to conduct Isolation, Quarantine, and Contact Tracing in accordance with guidance and requirements provided by MCOPH.
<p>Student Eligibility Requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students identified as a close contact exposed in a school setting. This does not include close contacts exposed at home, outside of the school setting, and community exposures. • Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. • Asymptomatic (without any signs or symptoms of COVID-19).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks must be worn at all times during the school day except for eating, drinking or mask breaks. • During the use of TTS, face shields are not acceptable. An individual who has a mask exemption will not qualify for TTS and will have to complete standard COVID-19 quarantine. • Parent/ Guardian consent to receive antigen testing provided in accordance to TTS antigen testing cadence.
Staff Eligibility Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff identified as a close contact exposed in a school setting. This does not include close contacts exposed at home or outside of the school day. • Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. • Asymptomatic (without any signs or symptoms of COVID-19). • Masks must be worn at all times during the school day. During the use of TTS, face shields are not acceptable. An individual who has a mask exemption will not qualify for TTS and will have to complete standard COVID-19 quarantine. • Staff consent to receive antigen testing provided in accordance to TTS antigen testing cadence.
TTS Antigen Testing Cadence	<p>Individuals should receive their initial CLIA Certified POC antigen test within 24 hours of notification of exposure, with additional testing every other day during the required 7-day quarantine period. Students must receive a minimum of one test between days 5 and 7 after exposure in order to be released from TTS on day 8. If school is not in session on days 5-7, students must receive their final test on the next school day to be released from TTS. If school is not in session and the last tests cannot be collected after day 10 of exposure, a test is not necessary.</p> <p>The individual will no longer be able to participate in TTS if they individual tests positive, become symptomatic or exposed outside of school. These individual they should be immediately isolated and sent home.</p> <p><i>Scenario 1: Student is notified they are a close contact on Wednesday, Day 3 after exposure. First test is done that day and is negative. Second test would be initiated on Friday, Day 5. If negative on Day 5 and student remains asymptomatic, upon returning to school on Monday, Day 8 and are finished with TTS.</i></p> <p><i>Scenario 2: Student is notified they are a close contact on Tuesday, Day 1 after exposure. First test is done Wednesday, Day 2. Third test is done on Friday, Day 4. Fourth test should be done on Monday, Day 7. If negative and asymptomatic, they are finished with TTS starting Day 8.</i></p>

	<p><i>Scenario 3: Student is notified they are a close contact on Friday Day 2 after exposure. First test is done that day is negative. Second test is completed on Monday, Day 5 and is negative. Third test should be done on Wednesday, Day 7. If negative and asymptomatic, they are finished with TTS starting Day 8.</i></p> <p>For guidance on interpretation of antigen testing refer to MCOPH Public Health Advisory: Updated interpretation of CLIA-Certified Point of Care Antigen Testing and PADOH PAHAN-605, Updated: Point of Care Antigen Test Use and Interpretation.</p>											
<p>Consistent and Correct Masking Use</p>	<p>On August 31, 2021, Pennsylvania’s Acting Secretary of Health signed an Order requiring face coverings to be worn in all school entities including school districts, brick and mortar and cyber charter schools, private and parochial schools, career and technical centers, intermediate units, and early learning and other child care settings, effective Tuesday, September 7, 2021.</p> <p>COVID-19 is transmitted predominately by inhalation of respiratory droplets generated when people cough, sneeze, sing, talk, or breathe. Masks are primarily intended to reduce the emission of virus-laden droplets (“source control”), which is especially relevant for asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic infected wearers who feel well and may be unaware of their infectiousness to others, and who are estimated to account for more than 50% of transmissions. Masks also help reduce inhalation of these droplets by the wearer. Mask is always worn, except while eating or drinking, and mask breaks.</p> <p>The following is additional guidance pertaining to individuals participating in TTS which consistent with masking order referenced above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the mask is removed, individuals should be at a minimum of 6 feet from others. • For TTS, face shields are not an acceptable alternative to masks. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>Classroom</i></th> <th><i>Lunch/Cafeteria</i></th> <th><i>Recess/Outdoors Activities</i></th> <th><i>High Risk Activities (including extra-curricular)</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Masks are required in the classroom.</td> <td>Masks are required unless engaged in eating and drinking.</td> <td>Masks is recommended to be worn. Additional guidance can be found in PA Secretary of Health Order requiring face coverings.</td> <td>Masks is recommended be worn. Additional guidance can be found in PA Secretary of Health Order requiring face coverings.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				<i>Classroom</i>	<i>Lunch/Cafeteria</i>	<i>Recess/Outdoors Activities</i>	<i>High Risk Activities (including extra-curricular)</i>	Masks are required in the classroom.	Masks are required unless engaged in eating and drinking.	Masks is recommended to be worn. Additional guidance can be found in PA Secretary of Health Order requiring face coverings.	Masks is recommended be worn. Additional guidance can be found in PA Secretary of Health Order requiring face coverings.
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<p>Enhanced Symptom Screening</p>	<p>Increase active symptom screening for individuals participating in TTS by school and parents/guardians. Individuals are encouraged to monitor for symptoms daily to identify if an individual develops signs of illness.</p>											

	<p>If an individual in TTS develops COVID-like symptoms according to the MCOPH School Exclusion Guide, they should be immediately isolated. The individual will no longer be able to participate in TTS and should complete the standard quarantine to help support reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19.</p>
<p>School Transportation (Busing)</p>	<p>TSS participants are strongly encouraged to utilize alternate transportation methods than school-based transportation (school bus). Families are encouraged to drop off and pick up students as an alternative form of transportation. If alternative transportation cannot be arranged, school/districts should consider allowing TSS participants to utilize school-based transportation applying the following considerations for distancing and barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close every other row of seats. • Provide physical guides to ensure that students remain at least six feet apart while on buses. For example, floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate where passengers should not sit or stand can be used to guide passengers. • Teach students to always be two arms lengths apart (e.g. if you spread your arms out you should not touch the other person's arms). • Reducing maximum occupancy of buses and increasing the number of buses available to service crowded routes. • Establishing a buffer zone behind the driver where the first row is left empty. • Assign seating on the bus following physical distancing guidelines. Allow students from the same household or living unit to sit together. • Maintain physical distancing at bus stops by students and their families/caregivers. <p>Considerations if physical distancing cannot be maintained for Schools/Districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned seating to keep consistency among those riding together so contact tracing can more readily be accomplished if cases of COVID-19 are reported. • Allow students from the same household or living unit to sit together. <p>Masks are required by federal order on school buses and other forms of public transportation in the United States. Per the CDC/ Health and Human Services (HHS) order for wearing of face masks while on conveyances, it requires individuals to wear masks while traveling on both public and private school transportation. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html</p> <p>Ventilation should be considered to help increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows, if this does not pose a safety risk to school bus passengers.</p>
<p>Physical Distancing</p>	<p>In accordance with MCOPH Recommendation for COVID-19 Prevention for K-12, 2021-2022 School Year, maintain at least 3 feet of physical distancing between students within classrooms to reduce the risk of transmission. A distance of 6 feet is recommended between students and teachers and staff. When it is not possible to wear a mask</p>

	(eating or drinking) individuals participating in TTS should maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance between students/teachers/staff.			
	Below is guidance for physical distancing in different school setting for those participating in TTS:			
	<i>Classroom</i>	<i>Lunch/Cafeteria</i>	<i>Recess/Outdoor Activities</i>	<i>High Risk Activities (including extra-curricular)</i>
	Maintain physical distancing of at least 3 feet between student to student, and at least 6 feet between students to staff.	Maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet between all occupants. This includes times when eating and drinking.	Maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet.	Maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet between all occupants.
Extra-Curricular Activities-Test to Participate	Individuals participating in TTS are eligible to participate in High Risk activities including extracurricular, sports, band, music, etc.) by completing additional antigen testing, known as Test to Participate (TTP). As part of TTP an individual should receive CLIA-Certified POC antigen test within 24 hours prior to the start of the high risk activity/event or daily if at a high risk activity. Masks should be worn when individuals are not in play including sidelines and locker rooms.			
Quarantine Outside of the School Setting	Individuals who participate in TTS are required to complete standard quarantine (as described in definitions) outside of the school setting. Individuals can stay in school and participate in extra-curricular activities through TTS.			
Internal Tracking System	CDC views TTS as a promising practice. See here for CDC’s statement on TTS. It is important for schools/districts implementing TTS to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy. All schools/districts should have a system in place to internally track those participating in TTS to include demographic information, exposure information, and testing details. Schools/Districts should be prepared to send this information if requested by MCOPH for evaluation purposes. Please see MCOPH School Guidance webpage for a sample MCOPH TTS Tracking Template of the information that should be included in schools/districts data collection.			

References:

COVID-19 Testing to Sustain in –Person Instruction and Extracurricular Activities in High Schools-Utah, November 2020-March 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7021e2.htm>

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 for School Administrators, Testing and Screening, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Updated October 18, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/admin-faq.html>

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State of Vermont Agency of Education, COVID-19 Testing- Testing to Stay, <https://education.vermont.gov/covid19/testing-test-to-stay>

Science Brief: Community Use of Cloth Masks to Control the Spread of SARS-CoV-2, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Updated May 7, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/masking-science-sars-cov2.html>

Scientific Brief: SARS-CoV-2 Transmission, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Updated May 7, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/sars-cov-2-transmission.html>