

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: DuPage County Healthcare, School, Child Care, and Community Partners  
FROM: Karen Ayala, MPH, Executive Director  
Rashmi Chugh, MD, MPH, Medical Officer  
DATE: October 4, 2021  
SUBJECT: **Updated Confirmatory\* COVID-19 Testing Protocols for DuPage County School and Community Settings, Updated Exclusion Protocols for Schools**

**I. Updated Confirmatory\* COVID-19 Testing Protocols for DuPage County School and Community Settings (replacing 4/19/2021 memo)**

A robust and responsive testing infrastructure is essential to our success in stopping the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides an [overview](#) on the categories of tests used to detect SARS-CoV-2 infection and the intended strategies for use of those tests, including to diagnose infection, to screen in an effort to reduce asymptomatic or presymptomatic transmission, and to monitor trends in infection. **This memo describes DuPage County Health Department's (DCHD) updated recommendations on COVID-19 viral tests (nucleic acid amplification tests [NAAT] or antigen tests).** Viral tests, including NAATs and antigen tests, are used as diagnostic tests to detect infection with SARS-CoV-2 and to inform an individual's medical care. Viral tests can also be used as screening tests to reduce the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 by identifying infected persons who need to isolate from others.

**For a symptomatic individual with COVID-19-like-illness (regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status), DCHD recommends a negative confirmatory\* COVID-19 test result, either initially or within 48 hours following a negative antigen test result or negative rapid molecular (rapid PCR) test result, for documentation recommended, but not required, to return to school, childcare center, or other community setting.** Aligned with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) [COVID-19 Interim Exclusion Guidance for Schools](#) in this scenario, "...a negative RT-PCR, rapid molecular (rapid PCR), or negative antigen test is acceptable" for a student or staff member to return to school or childcare center. Home test kits are not allowed. In the absence of negative viral COVID-19 testing to rule out a diagnosis of current COVID-19 infection, the student/staff member must complete the minimum 10-day isolation period prior to returning to school or childcare center.

For an individual with high pretest probability (e.g., symptomatic individual with COVID-19-like-illness [regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status]), **a positive antigen or rapid molecular (PCR) test: 1) does not require a confirmatory\* test, 2) should be considered a COVID-19 case, and 3) will not be discounted or deemed a false positive with a negative PCR or confirmatory\* test.**

**Over-the-counter (OTC), at-home COVID-19 tests**, where both specimen collection and testing are conducted at home and without proctoring, are currently not considered acceptable tests for the purpose of public health surveillance.



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**\*Confirmatory testing for current infection with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus which causes COVID-19 infection) must be a reverse-transcriptase PCR (RT-PCR) test or other [SARS-CoV-2 confirmatory nucleic acid amplification test \(NAAT\)](#). Because **laboratory-based NAATs** are considered the most sensitive tests for detecting SARS-CoV-2, they can also be used to confirm the results of lower sensitivity tests, such as POC NAATs or antigen tests. Saliva is an acceptable specimen type for SARS-CoV-2 testing, and some NAATs have been authorized for use with saliva specimens that provide definitive diagnostic and screening results. However, saliva specimen quality can be highly variable, which can affect the performance of the test. **CDC recommends collecting and testing an upper respiratory specimen, such as nasopharyngeal, nasal mid-turbinate, or anterior nasal, when using NAATs for confirmatory testing.** Confirmatory RT-PCR testing is offered at no cost at these **community-based testing sites**: [COVID-19 Testing in DuPage County](#) and [State of Illinois Community-Based Testing Sites](#).**

***NOTE:*** Please provide a copy of these testing recommendations (also posted [here](#)) to parents of students or to school/childcare center staff who are being referred for testing due to COVID-19-like-symptom(s), to share with their healthcare provider. DCHD's COVID-19 Education Team is available for consultation or questions at [COVID19Education@dupagehealth.org](mailto:COVID19Education@dupagehealth.org) or (630) 221-7928.

## II. Updated Exclusion Protocols for Schools

On September 21, 2021, Governor Pritzker issued [Executive Order 2021-25](#), which clarified schools' authority to exclude students and school personnel from school premises (including in-person instruction and extracurricular events) when students or school personnel are a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19; a close contact to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19; or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) also adopted an emergency administrative rule, [77 Ill. Admin. Code 690.361](#), to implement the Executive Order.

IDPH and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) have updated their [Revised Public Health Guidance for Schools](#) and related [FAQs](#) consistent with the Executive Order and emergency rule. Additionally, IDPH has provided [Public Health Interim Guidance for Local Health Departments and Pre-K- Schools – COVID-19 Exclusion Protocols](#), which provides practical guidance for schools and local health departments in complying with the Executive Order and rules. These updates are also summarized in this [fact sheet](#).

In addition, on September 29, 2021, IDPH posted updated [COVID-19 Interim Exclusion Guidance for Schools](#).

Current COVID-19 school guidance is available at:

DCHD: <https://www.dupagehealth.org/595/Schools-and-Daycares>

IDPH: <http://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/school-guidance>

ISBE: <https://www.isbe.net/coronavirus>

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

