



**Mississippi State Department of Health Public Health Guidance for the
Prevention and Control of COVID-19 in K-12 Settings
2022-2023 School Year
July 2022**

Introduction

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) recommends Mississippi K-12 schools follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) “Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools” as the primary guideline for establishing processes to prevent COVID-19 transmission in the school setting, and to maintain safe in-person education. MSDH will continue to provide state specific information as indicated.

CDC Guidance and Recommendations

Please note that CDC’s new COVID-19 Community Levels recommendations align precautions for educational settings with those for other community settings. See [COVID-19 Community Levels | CDC](#) for prevention steps to take based on the COVID-19 Community Level. Please note the recommendations for mask use in public indoor settings (including K-12 settings) are now based on the COVID-19 Community Levels.

MSDH recommends that K-12 settings in Mississippi follow the most current COVID-19 guidance from CDC:

- [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools | CDC](#);
- [Overview of COVID-19 Quarantine for K-12 Schools | CDC](#);
- [Overview of COVID-19 Isolation for K-12 Schools | COVID-19 | CDC](#)).
- K-12 schools should refer to the CDC’s COVID-19 Community Level to determine specific prevention strategies needed for their county: [COVID-19 by County | CDC](#).

Mississippi State Department of Health Specific Guidance and Recommendations

Isolation, Contact Tracing and Quarantine:

- Contact tracing and quarantine of exposed students/staff has been an important tool to prevent transmission in the school setting. *If a school is unable to continue contact tracing (e.g., staffing issues) MSDH recommends K-12 schools prioritize the identification and isolation/exclusion of COVID-19 positive individuals to minimize transmission.* MSDH recommends all schools continue



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

to isolate and exclude COVID-19 infected students, teachers, and staff per the current CDC guidelines. See [Overview of COVID-19 Isolation for K-12 Schools | COVID-19 | CDC](#)

- As staffing in the K-12 setting allows, Mississippi schools may continue to perform contact tracing per CDC guidance to identify staff and students who are exposed to COVID-19 positive individuals in the school setting.
- If a school or school district elects to continue contact tracing to identify exposed students and staff, the school or school district should continue to quarantine per the CDC recommendations (individuals who are up to date on vaccinations or who have COVID-19 infection in the past 90 days do not require quarantine after exposure). See [Overview of COVID-19 Quarantine for K-12 Schools | CDC](#)
- For students and staff who are quarantined because of exposure, MSDH offers COVID-19 testing options to allow for safe return to school after 5 days, or to continue in-person learning with more frequent testing and mask use. See MSDH school testing initiatives below.

Vaccination: Adopt-a-School Program

See the CDC guidance at [Stay Up to Date with Your Vaccines | CDC](#) for recommended primary series of vaccines and eligibility for booster doses.

MSDH is committed to facilitating on-site COVID-19 vaccinations for all interested schools through the development of an Adopt-a-school program. MSDH is working to put in place partnerships with local providers and healthcare systems through the COVID-19 Community Vaccination Partnership (CCVP) to directly provide COVID-19 vaccinations to all eligible students, teachers, and staff so all schools and school districts have the opportunity to have COVID-19 vaccinations available.

When a local provider partners with an adopted school, barriers are removed.

- All students, teachers, and staff 5 years old and above have access to vaccinations regardless of socioeconomic status.
- Parents do not have to search or disrupt normal routines to locate appropriate vaccine and provider.
- Schools can choose dates that best accommodate the school schedule.

School/School Districts Role

- Partnership to ensure appropriate school age children have access to the Covid-19 Vaccine.
- Help obtaining consent from parental guardians.
- Designation of space for a vaccination clinic at your location.
- Support from trusted members of the educational community and school board.



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Please visit <https://msdh.ms.gov/AdoptASchool> for additional details about the Adopt-a-school program. If your school or school district has interest in participating in onsite COVID-19 vaccinations for all eligible students, teachers, and staff, email your interest with the name of your school/school district and point of contact to Covid19vaccine@msdh.ms.gov

Mississippi State Department of Health School Testing Initiatives:

The Mississippi State Department of Health, with the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC), is supporting voluntary testing for COVID-19 in kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) school settings.

The goal of this program is to slow the spread of COVID-19 in these settings and to maintain in-person education through frequent testing of teachers/staff and students. There are three options to this program.

Option 1: Schools are provided tests and conduct their school screening testing or post-exposure testing themselves

Option 2: Schools may choose to utilize the MSDH testing vendor who will conduct the weekly school screening testing for the school

Option 3: In addition to Options 1 and 2, MSDH will provide schools with Home Tests which the school will distribute to students and staff for screening testing or post-exposure testing

Please see below for detailed explanations of each option, recommended testing algorithms, management of test results, and directions to enroll your school district. It is recommended that parental consent is obtained to conduct tests.

Option 1: School-Conducted Testing

Recommended algorithm for schools and school districts engaged in **screening testing**:

- Weekly screening of all interested **asymptomatic** teachers, staff, or students
- Weekly screening of **asymptomatic** students (and teachers/coaches) participating in school sponsored extracurricular activities of any type, including sports, as a condition of participation (school district decision).
- Schools receiving BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen tests (or other available rapid antigen tests provided by MSDH) through Option 1 of the MSDH School Based Screening Testing Initiative who are electing to perform contact tracing may also utilize these tests to:
 1. Discontinue Quarantine: test asymptomatic students/teachers and staff who are on quarantine at day 5 of their quarantine period. If the individual tests negative or



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

is not tested but is asymptomatic, they may return to the school setting after 5 days of quarantine. The individual must continue to mask for an additional 5 days.

Or,

2. Test to Stay: test asymptomatic students/teachers and staff on day 1, 3, and 5 after exposure. If the individual remains asymptomatic, tests negative, and strictly adheres to mask use for the ten days following exposure the individual can remain in the school setting during this time.

Additional Considerations:

- Schools are reimbursed for each test performed for the purpose of routine screening.
- Screening testing is not designed for symptomatic individuals. Any symptomatic student or teacher/staff should continue to be excluded from school/school district and be evaluated by their primary medical provider.

Managing Positive and Negative Tests in School Based Screening Testing

Positive Screening Tests

- Asymptomatic individuals who test positive with a screening test should be excluded from the school setting for 5 days from the date of the test as long as they remain asymptomatic. If they develop symptoms, they should be excluded for an additional 5 days from the onset of symptoms and are fever free for 24 hours before returning. The individual must wear a mask for an additional 5 days.
- Asymptomatic individuals with a positive rapid antigen test who have a negative molecular based COVID-19 test within 48 hours of the rapid positive do not require further exclusion and may return to the school setting. This only applies to molecular based tests (i.e., PCR) and does not include an additional antigen test or antibody tests.

Negative Screening Tests

- Asymptomatic individuals with a negative rapid screening test may continue in-person classes and extracurricular activities.

K-12 school districts can enroll in the School Based Testing Initiative and conduct on-site testing by following the steps below:

1. **Register for COVID-19 reporting with SimpleReport:** simplereport.gov/sign-up/
 - Identify the primary administrator for your school district's Simple Report account.
 - The administrator will go online to <https://simplereport.gov/sign-up/> and complete the registration form. (Note: If you choose to add each school (facility) in your district (organization) as a testing facility site, you will either need to complete the form once for each facility or have the administrator add sites once the account is created.)



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

- The initial application allows the administrator to specify details about the school district (including CLIA number and type(s) of tests that will be used for testing-in this case BinaxNOW will be the test type).
- Once the application is completed, Simple Report will verify the administrator's identity and guide them to online training videos.
- The administrator can then create additional users or sites as needed.
- Start testing and enter patient's information and test results. In order to be reimbursed for all tests you conduct, all patient information and test results (positive, negative, and indeterminate / inconclusive) must be entered into SimpleReport. (Remember, each student, teacher, and staff member's demographic information will only need to be entered the first time they are tested. After the first test, their account can be pulled up from the existing list of patients in your system and the new test result added.)

Additional info about creating a new account with Simple Report can be found at

<https://simplereport.gov/resources/getting-started/testing-facilities/onboard-your-organization/>

2. E-mail a completed [CLIA Certificate of Waiver application](#) to CLIA-MSDH@msdh.ms.gov

- Complete only one application for each school district.
- Complete only the highlighted demographic information on page 1.
- Skip to page 5 and have someone from the school district administration office print, sign and date the highlighted section and return the entire application. This should be an original signature. (There are no requirements for a Director of Laboratory, just someone who will verify that the testing performed is waived).

Once your CLIA certificate number is received (usually one to two days after applying):

3. Complete the online [COVID-19 School-Based Testing Initiative Application](#), and follow the directions to upload the signed MSDH School-Based Testing Initiative Agreement ([School-Based COVID-19 Testing Initiative Agreement for School Districts](#)) and enter the CLIA Certificate of Waiver Application number you receive.

After you have completed the application and uploaded the required documents, MSDH will be in contact with your school/school district to arrange for you to receive the initial allocation of test kits (after the initial allocation, MSDH will provide a mechanism for ordering additional test kits).

For guidance and assistance with the testing program, send an email to COVIDSchoolReporting@msdh.ms.gov

Note: Schools participating in Phase 1 of the testing initiative are also required to report individual test results through Simple Report for each test they conduct.



Option 2: Vendor-Conducted Testing

MSDH has contracted with a testing vendor (Maverick Health) to conduct statewide COVID-19 school screening testing only. Maverick Health will be contacting each school district via mass communication and individual web meetings/conference calls to determine school district/school participation.

To enroll in vendor-conducted school-based testing, or for questions about this option, please contact Maverick Health or MSDH at the addresses below:

- MSK12@mav.health

Or:

- COVIDSchoolReporting@msdh.ms.gov

More information: [Overview of the vendor supported COVID-19 School Screening Testing Program](#) PDF

Option 3: Home Tests for Exposure / Close Contact Quarantine and Screening

K-12 schools electing to perform contact tracing can enroll in the School Based Testing Initiative to address students and staff who are identified as close contacts because of a school-based exposure. Option 3 will provide At-Home Tests for the school to distribute to exposed students and staff. The at-home over the counter test is to be used at day 5 of quarantine in order to safely return to school. Alternatively, the home tests can be used to allow close contacts to continue in the school setting by implementing a test to stay program.

All K-12 districts / schools are eligible to enroll in Option 3, to include those that are currently enrolled and participating in Option 1 or Option 2. Districts / schools not currently participating in Option 1 or Option 2 can also choose to enroll in Option 3 only, if interested.

MSDH will provide Home Tests to schools electing to perform contact tracing. The tests will be provided **free of charge**. The tests can be utilized as follows:

1. Discontinue Quarantine: test asymptomatic students/teachers and staff who are on quarantine at day 5 of their quarantine period. If the individual tests negative or is not



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

tested but is asymptomatic, they may return to the school setting after 5 days of quarantine. The individual must continue to mask for an additional 5 days.

Or,

2. **Test to Stay:** test asymptomatic students/teachers and staff on day 1, 3, and 5 after exposure. If the individual remains asymptomatic, tests negative, and strictly adheres to mask use for the ten days following exposure the individual can remain in the school setting during this time.

Additionally, schools may distribute home tests to students and staff for weekly asymptomatic screening. Recommended algorithm for schools and school districts engaged in **screening testing**:

- Weekly screening of all interested **asymptomatic** teachers, staff, or students
- Weekly screening of **asymptomatic** students (and teachers/coaches) participating in school sponsored extracurricular activities of any type, including sports, as a condition of participation (school district decision).

Individuals with a positive home-based test should be considered COVID-19 infected and should isolate as described above.

The Option 3 program is voluntary, testing is not required to end at home quarantine at day 5 but can be utilized to provide additional safeguards and reduce transmission in the school setting.

To enroll in Option 3, please send your request to the following email address:

COVIDschoolreporting@msdh.ms.gov. The following information must be submitted with your request:

- School name, address, and shipping address
- School point of contact and contact information
- Total number of students
- Total number of all teachers, faculty, and school employees

Please allow 3-7 business days to receive your kits. If participating in Option 3, report the number of home tests distributed each week using the link below. No reimbursement will be provided in Option 3.

- [Weekly reporting form](#)

Resources

- [School-Based COVID-19 Testing Initiative Agreement for School Districts](#)
- [CLIA Certificate of Waiver Application for School Districts](#)
- [Overview of the vendor supported COVID-19 School Screening Testing Program](#)