



COVID-19 Saliva Testing for Students and School Staff: Program Guide for Coordinators

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As COVID-19 continues to spread, Minnesota is continually expanding testing options and working to remove barriers so every Minnesotan can access testing. Experts agree that testing is a critical part of the process to identify, contain and stop the spread of the virus.

Minnesota continues to prioritize in-person learning while protecting the health and safety of our students, staff and families. For this reason, state leaders are working to ensure that students and school staff are prioritized for COVID-19 testing.

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About COVID-19 testing

All students and school staff are encouraged to be tested regularly, regardless of symptoms.

- This guidance explains how to implement an onsite surveillance testing program for students and staff.
 1. **Onsite student testing** programs are optional, but all schools are strongly encouraged to offer onsite testing options for students.
 2. **Onsite staff testing** programs for those working in-person are **required** for all public and charter schools operating an in-person or hybrid learning model. All in-person staff must have access to these programs, including bus drivers, child care and early learning program staff (early childhood family education [ECFE], early childhood special education [ECSE], prekindergarten, school readiness, and school-age care), community education staff, educators, nutrition staff, paraprofessionals, school and district administration and office staff, school nurses, and student support staff such as social workers and guidance counselors
- In addition, students and staff are encouraged to take advantage of the community, at-home, and provider testing options in the event they have a need for more frequent or urgent testing due to development of symptoms or having been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case. Testing resources (community sites and at-home ordering) are available at mn.gov/covid19.

Key points about onsite staff and student testing programs

- Testing of students and staff in onsite programs can be provided free of charge, without billing to insurance, through the State of Minnesota's partnership with Vault.
- Testing is optional for students and staff.
 - Note: Weekly testing is strongly encouraged for any Minnesotan participating in organized sports. Schools who offer surveillance testing onsite for their sports programs should include those tests in their school program orders and collection report. More information about orders and collection reports is available in the [Getting set up](#) section.
- Individual test results are provided by Vault Health directly to the user ID or email associated with the testing participant's Vault Health account.
- The duration of this testing program depends on continued funding.
- Students and staff will need to create a Vault account with a username and password and provide consent to Vault to participate in testing.
 - Students who are 18 years of age or older may create an account and provide consent without a parent or guardian.
 - Students who are under 18 years old will need a parent or legal guardian to provide consent on the student's behalf.

- Schools will not receive test results or Vault account information directly. Students and staff are strongly encouraged to inform schools of positive results so that the school can take steps to prevent the spread of the virus to other students and staff. Students and staff must follow any requirements in the K-12 quarantine and isolation guidance on the Stay Safe Minnesota Schools page (<https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/schools.jsp>).

Onsite Student Testing

Schools choosing to develop and implement an onsite student testing program may:

1. Host in-person COVID-19 testing events for all middle and high school students every two weeks. These could be held in tandem with the existing staff testing program.
2. Make Zoom-enabled COVID-19 tests available every two weeks for any middle and high school student to pick up, take home and return to school to be sent to the lab. For this option, schools should allow students who do not have a home mailing address or who have limited access to technology to take the test in a school building.
 - **Note:** Schools offering pick-up Zoom-enabled tests for students to take home and administer and then bring back for shipment should create a pick-up and drop-off schedule that aligns with their [assigned testing day](#) so that the Zoom-enabled tests can be sent to the lab along with tests from their regular onsite event. This also applies when schools are accepting at-home tests that students and families have ordered on their own through the state's at-home testing program. This will ensure students receive their results in a timely manner.
3. A combination of the two.

All public schools should to continue to accept COVID-19 tests for UPS mailing from students who have used an at-home Vault test through the State of Minnesota's at-home testing program. See the note under item two above regarding scheduling.

Considerations and implications for school operations

- **Awaiting Results and Quarantine:** These screening testing programs are intended to identify asymptomatic cases. Students and staff who participate in COVID-19 testing and have no COVID-19 symptoms and/or no known COVID-19 exposure can continue to attend school, work and activities while awaiting test results.
- **Results and Program Impact:** Results are typically available from Vault within 48 hours of being received at state saliva testing laboratory sites. Results are reported directly to the tested student or staff person by e-mail, phone, or through the individual's online Vault account. Onsite screening testing events must be conducted on an assigned day. See the note under item two in the section above regarding scheduling.
- **Staff, Student, and Community Questions:** MDE will provide language to schools to explain the program to students, staff, and families.
- **Safety Measures.** Ensure all safety measures can be followed throughout the event. Participants must remain 6ft apart at all times and must wear a mask except when self-administering the test. Following each administration, the testing station must be sanitized before the station is used by the next person.

Equity and Access for Students

The purpose of the student testing program is to make COVID-19 tests more accessible to young Minnesotans as cases continue to rise. During the pandemic, schools have had to step into nontraditional roles to ensure students and families have access to supports that help keep them healthy and safe. This is one of those times.

To reduce barriers for students and families, schools should consider providing an onsite testing program or a space with a technology device connected to the Internet where students without home internet can take a test. Schools should also consider providing technology to families without home internet to set up a Vault account and provide the necessary consent for students to participate in an in-school testing program.

Implementing a COVID-19 testing program in your school

Public and charter schools in a hybrid or in-person learning model are required to have an onsite testing program available to in-person staff, and schools are encouraged to offer a testing program to students. School staff members have been trained to manage the program: receive test kits, oversee school staff as they self-administer the tests onsite every other week, and mail the kits back to lab.

Onsite testing coordinators have taken a virtual training on how to supervise saliva testing administration. Monday-Friday, a Zoom room will be hosted by a trained medical professional at Vault Health for exclusive use by schools and child care programs in the midst of conducting testing. Any school or testing participant may log on to this room for assistance with completing the test or troubleshooting. The Zoom link and customer service information are found in the Who to contact if you need support section of this document. Please contact MDE at COVIDTesting.MDE@state.mn.us if you are onboarding a new testing coordinator or need any additional training.

- **Site-level Testing Coordinator.** Each site has a designated person in the role of site testing coordinator to manage the planning and execution of the screening test program. This person coordinates the on-site testing every other week, including setting up the events, ensuring technology and other support is provided to school staff during the testing event, as well as getting the test samples sent to the lab.
 - Union representatives and other individuals on the Incident Command Team should be engaged in the selection and support of the site testing coordinator in addition to the full roll-out of the screening test program. Identify this person and any alternates prior to the first day of onsite testing.
- **Roles that will need to be assigned on testing day.** On the day of testing, there are three critical roles that must be filled:
 - **Traffic controller.** This person encourages social distancing and mask wearing. They direct participants to an open testing station.

- **Test supervisors (this should be the Site-level Testing Coordinator).** This person must be trained before supervising test administration for students and staff. This person greets participants as they arrive at the testing station. They assist with the online registration process and troubleshoot technology issues. After a student or staff member has self-administered their test, the test supervisor, this person checks to make sure the saliva meets the vial line (saliva, not bubbles/foam, must reach the line). Then, they disinfect the testing station before the next participant arrives.
- **Check-out Person.** This role verifies the participant has completed the testing process on their device and thanks the participant as they leave. This person should count packages and samples regularly.
- **Testing tips for students and staff.** Prior to testing beginning, please inform participants about how and where they will go for the onsite testing. Students and staff who would like to receive the test should:
 - Hydrate up to 30 minutes prior to testing
 - Not eat, drink, smoke, or chew gum 30 minutes prior
 - Have a smartphone available during testing if possible (site coordinators can also use a computer or tablet at the site)
- **Collection.** After conducting testing, schools must complete the testing collection report to provide information about kits used, kits remaining, if more kits are needed for the next round of testing (every other week), and feedback on the testing experience.

To help ensure tests are available by designated testing dates, collection reports must be completed within 24 hours of completing testing events. Schools should identify a need for additional inventory at least two weeks before that inventory will be used.

- Schools offering testing more than every two weeks (e.g. weekly testing for student athletes) should still submit only **one** collection report within 24 hours of their assigned staff testing day. The report should be inclusive of all student and staff testing in the entire two-week window.
- **Unused test kits.** The number of test kits needed is likely to fluctuate between tests dates. Before ordering the next batch of testing kits, please assess how many unused kits you have on site. Account for the unused tests kits you have on hand when placing your next order for tests. For example, if you have 10 unused test kits and you know you need 50 test kits for your next round of testing, please only order 40 new kits.

Getting set up

- **Schedule.** Students and staff will be tested every other week* on a specific day, depending on which Regional Service Cooperative serves the school district or charter school. Assigned dates are listed below. The testing will occur on a two-week rotation, beginning on the date listed. Following this schedule is critical to manage COVID-19 testing lab capacity.
 - *Note: Weekly testing is strongly encouraged for anyone participating in sports. Middle and high school testing coordinators should work with their athletic directors to support this testing. Schools who are testing their school-affiliated sports programs should include those tests in

their school program orders and collection report. This may also require schools to send a shipment to the lab more frequently. [Learn more about sports testing requirements.](#)

- **If you are offering pick-up Zoom-enabled tests for students to take home and administer and then bring back for shipment, you should create a pick-up and drop-off schedule that aligns with your assigned testing day so that the Zoom-enabled tests can be sent to the lab along with tests from your regular onsite event. This will ensure students receive their results in a timely manner.**
 - ***Schools should continue with their currently assigned testing dates on the current cycle. First upcoming testing date that will include student testing for each region:***
 - **Monday, April 26:** Metro A (see [Appendix A](#) for breakdown of schools)
 - **Tuesday, April 27:** Sourcewell and Lakes Country
 - **Wednesday, April 28:** Southeast
 - **Thursday, April 29:** Resource Training & Solutions
 - **Friday, April 30:** Northwest
 - **Monday, May 3:** Metro B (See [Appendix A](#) for breakdown of schools)
 - **Tuesday, May 4:** Southwest
 - **Wednesday, May 5:** Northeast
 - **Thursday, May 6:** Southcentral
 - **Friday, May 7:** Nonpublic Schools
- **Ordering.** Testing coordinators will need to order test kits for students and staff and complete a collection report after each testing day.
 - **Initial registration survey:** <https://surveys.mn.gov/s/82cfes>. Use this form only if you have not yet registered to participate in the staff COVID-19 testing program. If your school is already in an in-person or hybrid learning model, you are probably already registered and there is no need to complete a second registration. You can request additional tests for students in your collection report.
 - **Collection report:** <https://surveys.mn.gov/s/3rat1g>
- **Receiving your test kits.** Testing supplies will continue to be mailed to your school. Please request a supply that will fill your testing needs for students and staff for the next cycle of testing.
 - **NOTE: Zoom-enabled tests (if you are offering pick-up tests or a zoom room rather than in-school testing) will be shipped in a box separate from the self-administered tests. Please keep these separate from the non-Zoom-enabled tests for your onsite events. These Zoom-enabled tests are for students only. It is important to ensure the correct type of test (Zoom-enabled) are sent home with students.**

Student testing program: Parent and guardian verification of consent to Vault for testing

Students who are able to consent to Vault testing (age 18 and older) and parents or guardians for students who are unable to consent to Vault testing (age 18 and older) provide consent directly to Vault. Schools that are supervising testing directly may want to obtain verification that the student has provided the necessary consent to Vault. While schools will not receive medical information (i.e., test

results) or account information from Vault, schools should be aware that test supervisors will be involved with administering a medical test, and may be present to provide assistance in settings that include private conversations between Vault medical professionals and students. Schools are strongly encouraged to verify clearly with students (and, where necessary, parents and legal guardians) that they understand these issues and want school staff assistance before undergoing testing.

A [sample acknowledgement of consent for Vault testing is available](#). Each school must evaluate their own legal obligations and testing programs and determine whether verification of consent is necessary for their testing program. The following points are important to consider:

- **Schools are strongly encouraged to consult with legal counsel. The State of Minnesota cannot provide legal advice to schools or districts and this document should not be relied upon as legal advice.**
- Schools may be subject to federal and state laws that govern student data, which for some schools may include the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Different schools may have different federal and state obligations, including those that apply to student data.
 - Minnesota Statutes, section 13.04, subdivision 2 requires those subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act to provide a “Tennessee Warning” containing specific information before collecting private or confidential data concerning individuals.
- Vault does not authorize release of testing data directly to schools, and nothing in this guidance should be interpreted as requiring students, parents, or legal guardians to furnish testing or other private information to schools. Students (and, where applicable, parents or legal guardians) are not required to agree to testing involving school staff, but each student (and, where applicable, parent or legal guardian) may choose to participate in testing and seek staff assistance voluntarily.

Step-by-step guide for each individual self-administered test

Step 1: Ensure students and staff have a smartphone/tablet with internet access and have not had anything to eat, drink, smoke, or chewed gum in the 30 minutes prior to testing

Step 2: Have students and staff go to COVID.VLT.CO on their smartphone/tablet

- *Note:* Participants who used this same device to order a saliva test from Vault through the testing program this fall may be automatically redirected to that site, which would cause an error. If this happens, advise the participant that they should open a private browser on their device or manually type the website again to confirm it is directing to the correct site.

Step 3: Staff log in at the top of the first page using their email address, password, and complete basic steps to register test. Students log in using the username and password they created the account with.

- Remind them that they should remember their login and password

Step 4: Provide the student or staff their test tube when prompted; confirm it is the correct person taking the test.

- If someone does not remember their password, they would simply hit the "forgot password" button and reset in the email they provided to register.
- Everyone on site should make sure that they are logging in on the "covid.vlt.co" site.

Step 5: Student or staff completes the saliva test

Step 6: Verify test tube has appropriate amount of sample

Step 7: Direct student or staff to cover the test tube, shake the solution for 5 seconds and place in biohazard bag.

Results are typically available to individuals at the email or phone provided within 48 hours of being received.

Step-by-step guide for each individual Zoom-enabled test (if taken onsite)

These instructions apply in situations where a school is offering a space for students who may not have access to Internet or technology at home to take an at-home, Zoom-enabled test. The Zoom-enabled tests should not be used for a larger onsite testing event. **Zoom-enabled tests ordered by a school are intended for student use only.**

Step 1: Ensure students have a smartphone/tablet with internet access and have not had anything to eat, drink, smoke, or chewed gum in the 30 minutes prior

Step 2: Students must provide their sample under a remote supervision (via Zoom video) for their test to be processed. To meet with a Vault test supervisor, students go to [COVID.VLT.CO](https://covid.vlt.co) on their smartphone/tablet

- *Note:* Participants who used this same device to order a saliva test from Vault through the testing program last fall may be automatically redirected to that site, which would cause an error. If this happens, advise the participant that they should open a private browser on their device or manually type the website again to confirm it is directing to the correct site.

Step 3: Students log in using the username and password they created the account with and complete basic steps to register test.

- Remind them that they should remember their login and password

Step 4: The supervisor will guide them through collecting saliva in the tube. This process typically takes just a few minutes

- If someone does not remember their password, they would simply hit the "forgot password" button and reset in the email they provided to register.

- Everyone on site should make sure that they are logging in on the "covid.vlt.co" site.

Step 5: Student will cover the test tube, shake the solution for 5 seconds, place tube in biohazard bag, and place biohazard bag in the cardboard box for shipping.

- School will need to set up method to collect the box for shipping sample to the lab for processing.

Results are typically available to individuals at the email or username provided within 48 hours of being received.

Following the testing event, site-level coordinator must complete these steps

Step 1: Ensure all tests (including tests from the event and any student Zoom-enabled tests that have been collected) are in the biohazard bag and get the package ready to mail.

- Place up to 50 completed tubes per large biohazard bag
- Place 1 biohazard bag of 50 tubes in 1 UPS bag
- **Note: UPS bag includes lining in it; please do not remove this from the UPS bag**

Step 2: Complete collection report

Step 3: Drop off the tests at a UPS Store (drop off must be at a store, not a UPS access point). Make sure to document the return tracking number for your shipment, for your own reference.

- Find a store nearby: <https://www.theupsstore.com/tools/find-a-store>.

Additional helpful information

Troubleshooting topics

- All participants must register using a unique email address or by creating a unique user ID and password. Results will be sent to this email address or user ID.
- Participants are re-directed to a Vault webpage that asks them the address for kits to be mailed or other non-relevant questions. This is likely a result of saved cookies on their device and a re-direct based on base usage and traffic on Vault's website from the individual device. Staff should:
 - Close the browser and open a private browser on the smartphone or tablet. Start over by typing in COVID.VLT.CO into browser.
 - Alternatively, staff can go to the web address and re-enter manually the link (COVID.VLT.CO).
- Common errors with the first page (example, can't click "next"). Double check these items:
 - Birthday: Ensure the year was typed correctly (ex. 1964 instead of 0064 or the date instead of their date of birth). If the user typed 2020 instead of their birth year, the website will then ask

for a photo ID of a guardian. Click the back button at the upper left of the screen and change the birth year.

- Ethnicity and race: Users must select an option in **both** categories.
- If the internet connection gets lost or the webpage is taking too long to load, remind the user that their information is not lost. They will need to go to covid.vlt.co and log-in again. Then click “finish my order” to pick-up where they left off.
- Error when scanning barcode on test kit:
 - Double check the barcode numbers match the collection tube
 - If scanned try typing in the numbers, if typed try scanning
 - Try tapping “NEXT” again
 - Set kit aside and try another kit
- If a vial needs to be disposed of (received error code, vial was dropped on floor, someone couldn’t produce enough saliva, etc.): Place blue cap onto vial and place in sharps container.
- Participants did not receive their test results:
 - Visit www.vaulthealth.com, then use either the email address and password or user ID and password to login as completed during testing process.
- Storing samples
 - The tests are not temperature sensitive and do not need to be refrigerated.

Who to contact if you need support

For questions about self-administering the tests, a Registered Nurse will be available in a zoom room **Monday - Friday: 6:30 - 9:30 a.m.**

- Zoom link: <https://vaulthealth.zoom.us/j/5330756419>

For questions about the website/technology, a hotline number to reach a Vault (COVID-19 testing company) representative is available **Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. at (929) 205-6741.**

Vault can be reached for questions about results at **mn@vaulthealth.com or 800-800-5698.**

MDE’s COVID-19 Testing team is available to answer questions specific to ordering, testing event procedures and collection reports via email COVIDTesting.MDE@state.mn.us

MDH’s sports team is available to answer questions specific to testing for sports:
Health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us

For additional school-related questions, coordinators should reach out to their regional testing coordinator (at their regional support team).

Resources

- Handling a Suspected or Confirmed Positive Case of COVID-19: Information for Schools (PDF) – If a student or staff member notifies you of a positive test result, please use this document to guide you through next steps. With increased COVID-19 case growth in Minnesota, it can take a few days to hear from local or state public health.

Information to Share with those Participating in COVID-19 Testing

Students or staff with symptoms or who have been exposed to COVID-19 should not report to work, school, or other activities and should quarantine according to public health guidance.

Test results are provided via email - be sure to provide an email you check regularly. Test results are usually emailed within 48 hours after the lab receives the test. Test results can be provided by phone for individuals without access to e-mail.

If your test result is positive for COVID-19, MDH or local public health will call you with health information for you and the people who live with you. It is important to answer this call, so you can learn how to keep yourself, your family, and your community safe.

Your information is confidential unless you give permission to share your name. However, in rare circumstances, MDH may need to share your name with your workplace, school, or child care to protect the health and safety of others. MDH will attempt to contact you prior to doing so.

Health guidance for school is available on the MDH website.



Minnesota Department of Education | education.mn.gov
1500 Highway 36 West, Roseville, MN 55113

Appendix A: Metro A and Metro B schools

Metro A

Academia Cesar Chavez Charter School	New City School
Academic Arts High School	New Heights School, Inc.
AFSA High School	New Millennium Academy Charter Sch
Avalon School	New Prague Area Schools
Beacon Academy	North Metro Flex Academy
Bright Water Elementary	North St. Paul-Maplewood Oakdale Public School District
Burnsville Public School District	Northeast Metro 916
Central Public School District	Northwest Passage High School
College Preparatory Elementary	Nova Classical Academy
Cologne Academy	Parnassus Preparatory Charter Sch
Cornerstone Montessori Elementary	Perpich Center For Arts Education
Cyber Village Academy	Prairie Creek Community School
Eagle Ridge Academy Charter School	Prodeo Academy
Eastern Carver County Public School	Progeny Academy Charter School
Edina Public School District	Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan
El Colegio Charter School	Roseville Public School District
Excell Academy Charter	SciTech Academy Charter School
Fridley Public School District	Seven Hills Preparatory Academy
Global Academy	Skyline Math and Science Academy
Great Oaks Academy Charter School	Sojourner Truth Academy
Great River School	South Washington County School Dist
Hmong College Prep Academy	Southside Family Charter School
Hopkins Public School District	Southwest Metro Intermediate 288
Horizon Science Academy Twin Cities Charter	Spring Lake Park Public Schools
Intermediate School District 917	St. Anthony-New Brighton Schools
International Spanish Language Academy	St. Francis Area Schools
Jennings Community School	St. Paul City School
KIPP Minnesota Charter School	St. Paul Public School District
Lakes International Language Academy	STEP Academy Charter School
Lakeville Public School District	Stonebridge World School
Laura Jeffrey Academy Charter	Tesfa International School
Level Up Academy	Three Rivers Montessori School
Life Prep	Twin Cities German Immersion Charter School
Lincoln International School	Universal Academy Charter School
Lionsgate Academy	Venture Academy
LoveWorks Academy For Arts	Waconia Public School District
Mahtomedi Public School District	Watertown-Mayer Public School Dist.
Metro Deaf School	Wayzata Public School District
Metro Schools Charter	West St. Paul-Mendota Hts.-Eagan
Metro Tech Academy Charter School	Westonka Public School District
Minnesota Department of Corrections	White Bear Lake School District
Minnesota Internship Center	Woodbury Leadership Academy
Minnesota Online High School	Yinghua Academy
Minnesota Transitions Charter School	
Minnesota Wildflower Montessori School	

Metro B

Achieve Language Academy	Minnesota Excellence in Learning Academy
Agamim Classical Academy	Minnesota Math and Science Academy
Anoka-Hennepin Public School District	Minnnetonka Public School District
Aspen Academy	Modern Montessori Charter School
Athlos Leadership Academy	Mounds View Public School District
Augsburg Fairview Academy	Nasha Shkola Charter School
Aurora Charter School	Natural Science Academy
Bdote Learning Center	New Century School
Belle Plaine Public School District	Noble Academy
Best Academy	North Lakes Academy
Bloomington Public School District	Northeast College Prep
BlueSky Charter School	Notre Ecole Academy
Brooklyn Center School District	Orono Public School District
Career Pathways	Osseo Public School District
Cedar Riverside Community School	PACT Charter School
Centennial Public School District	Paladin Career and Technical High School
City Academy	Partnership Academy, Inc.
Columbia Heights Public School Dist	PIM Arts High School
Community of Peace Academy	Prairie Seeds Academy
Community School of Excellence	Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools
DaVinci Academy	Quantum STEAM Academy Charter School
Discovery Charter School	Randolph Public School District
Dugsi Academy	Richfield Public School District
Eden Prairie Public School District	Robbinsdale Public School District
Face To Face Academy	SAGE Academy Charter School
Farmington Public School District	Sejong Academy of Minnesota
FIT Academy	Shakopee Public School District
Forest Lake Public School District	South St. Paul Public School Dist.
Friendship Academy of Fine Arts Charter	Spero Academy
Gateway STEM Academy	St Paul Conservatory Performing Art
Hastings Public School District	St. Croix Preparatory Academy
Hennepin Elementary School	St. Louis Park Public School Dist.
Hiawatha Academies	St. Paul School of Northern Lights
High School For Recording Arts	Star of the North Academy Charter School
Higher Ground Academy	Stillwater Area Public School Dist.
HOPE Community Academy	Success Academy
Innovation Science and Technology Academy	The Journey School
Intermediate School District 287	Twin Cities Academy
Inver Grove Heights Schools	Twin Cities International Schools
Jordan Public School District	Ubah Medical Academy Charter School
Marine Area Community School	Upper Mississippi Academy
Mastery School	Urban Academy Charter School
Math And Science Academy	Watershed High School
Minneapolis Public School District	World Learner Charter School