

Wolfe County Schools Test to Stay Guidance

GUIDANCE FOR “TEST TO STAY” STRATEGY FOR K-12 SCHOOLS

In-person instruction for K-12 students is a priority. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on an optional strategy for managing COVID-19 exposures in the school setting. CDC guidelines emphasize the implementation of layered prevention strategies to protect students, teachers, and staff which includes isolation of persons who test positive for COVID-19 as well as contact tracing and quarantine of unvaccinated contacts. This document outlines considerations for a “test to stay” strategy to allow unvaccinated individuals who are exposed to COVID-19 at school to continue with in-person instruction with repeated negative COVID-19 test results. This program is intended for continuity of education, not for continued participation in athletic programs or extracurricular activities.

Requirements of a Test to Stay strategy:

1. Implementation of a screening testing program at the school (or in the school district) that provides rapid COVID-19 testing to students, faculty, and staff at no cost to the individual. The school/district is responsible for ensuring the appropriate arrangements for testing are made.
2. Limited to school-related exposures only and not applicable to exposures that occur outside of school or in the community (i.e. in a household).
3. Voluntary participation by exposed contacts. In the case of minors, testing should be conducted with informed consent from the parent/guardian.
4. Implementation of a universal masking program in the school for all students, teachers, and staff.

Contact Tracing Procedures with a Test to Stay option:

- Schools should develop a methodology to identify individuals who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19. A close contact is defined as someone who was within 6 feet of an infectious person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes in a 24-hour period.

- o Exception: In the indoor K-12 classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were at least 3 feet away from an infected student if both students were appropriately masked and other COVID-19 prevention strategies were in place. This exception does not apply to adults in the indoor classroom setting.

- All close contacts in a school setting should be notified of their possible exposure.

- o Unvaccinated students, teachers, or staff identified as close contacts should be instructed to either:

- ? Quarantine away from school OR

- ? Participate in the Test to Stay program

- o Fully vaccinated persons do not need to quarantine following an exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 if he/she is not experiencing symptoms. However, it is recommended that they be tested 3-5 days after an exposure.

• Quarantine may be discontinued:

- o After day 7 if the individual is symptom free and receives a negative COVID-19 test 5 days or later after last exposure to the case OR

- o After day 10 without testing if the individual is symptom free.

To be Eligible for the Test to Stay program:

- Be entirely asymptomatic without any signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Wear a mask indoors when at school for the entirety of the program, even if all test results are negative. A surgical-type mask that fits securely is preferred over a cloth mask.
- Quarantine when not at school. When not at school, the exposed individual must stay home and refrain from all extracurricular activities, including sports and other activities in the community.

Test to Stay Protocol

Persons who meet all eligibility criteria as outlined above and who have consented to participate in the program should observe the following protocol:

- The test should be an FDA-approved rapid antigen test and be performed by a licensed healthcare provider or trained personnel under a CLIA waiver.

- Testing should be performed each day that the individual is in-person at school.
- Testing should occur at the school or at an offsite location accessible to students, faculty, and staff.
- Symptom screening, including temperature checks, should occur at the time of testing.
- Testing should be initiated as soon as possible after the identified exposure and all subsequent days through day 5 after last exposure. Testing and quarantine outside of school may be discontinued after day 7 if all test results have been negative
- Testing should occur at the start of the day and negative results should be received before an individual participated in school activities; where possible, exposed students should refrain from riding a school bus prior to receiving a negative daily test.
- If a test result is positive, the individual must be sent home immediately.
- Testing is recommended to be performed a minimum of 24 hours apart.
- Individuals who refuse to complete the daily testing should be immediately sent home to quarantine and follow standard quarantine procedures.

Additional Considerations:

- The Test to Stay strategy may be most appropriate for school settings where students are cohorted in a single classroom or grade and are not mixing with other students.
- The Test to Stay strategy may not be appropriate for all in-school exposures. It is reasonable to consider additional factors to determine whether the exposure presents higher risk, such as:
 - o Lack of layered prevention strategies in the school.
 - o Total number of consecutive days of exposure.
 - o Participation in activities that are high risk for disease transmission (i.e. singing, playing wind instruments)