



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

To: Local School Systems, Local Health Departments, Local Superintendents, Local Health Officers

From: Jinlene Chan,  MD, MPH, FAAP, Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services

Date: September 22, 2021

Subject: Resources to Support Maryland's Students: Maryland Department of Health and Maryland State Department of Education extend application period for COVID-19 preventive testing efforts in K-12 Schools

K-12 Screening Testing RFA Extension

In July 2021, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), launched an opportunity for public and non-public K-12 schools to participate in an MDH-supported Screening Testing Program. This opportunity is funded through a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Enhancing Laboratory Capabilities (ELC) grant, totaling \$182 million. The application period has been extended again to October 10, 2021, to enable school systems and non-public schools that have not yet applied to take advantage of the opportunity to provide screening testing services during the 2021-2022 school year.

Each school or school system conducting screening testing will develop its own implementation plan, including frequency of testing and the population to be tested and will communicate any requirements to students and parents. Only students who have completed a consent form will be included in the testing. Schools have the option to choose a vendor from one of five laboratory service contracts that MDH has under contract to provide all-inclusive on-site testing for K-12 students. The other option is for schools to engage in their own contracting with a lab service vendor and apply for a fixed reimbursement rate.

To date, fourteen public school systems including Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Caroline, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, and Worcester have initiated the process of launching screening testing programs along with 80 non-public schools across the state.

K-12 Diagnostic Testing Resources

Since March of the 2020-2021 school year, K-12 schools have been able to participate in MDH's diagnostic screening program. Under this program, MDH provides rapid Point of Care COVID-19 tests and PCR tests to schools who test identified students, either those who are exhibiting

symptoms or close contacts identified through contact tracing. PCR tests are used to confirm POC test results.

Eighteen public school systems including Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Garrett, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester have implemented the diagnostic testing program.

For the 2020-21 school year, 250,520 Point of Care tests and 135,625 PCR tests were provided totaling \$1.6 million. For the 2021-2022 school year thus far, 99,920 Point of Care tests and 65,852 PCR tests have been provided, totaling \$517,000. Many school systems have an adequate supply remaining from the 2020-2021 school year and have not requested to be resupplied at this point.

Interested schools should email mdh.k12testing@maryland.gov to request POC tests or vendors to be able to order PCR tests directly. Currently there are over 320,000 POC tests in MDH's inventory available for schools to access.

Additional information about the MDH/MSDE testing initiative can be found [here](#). We do not recommend that school systems rely solely on local health departments for testing resources.

Federal and State Schools Support

Beyond these specifically funded programs, over the past 18 months, Maryland's local school systems have received more than \$2.7 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) distributed in three different awards. These funds can be spent very flexibly to support schools. One of the eligible uses of the funding is "to support other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation and continuity of services in local education agencies", which would certainly cover testing and ventilation costs.

It is estimated that more than \$2 billion of this federal funding is currently unspent.

Additionally, Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City have received \$1.7 billion in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. A portion of these funds could be provided to local school systems to cover associated testing and ventilation costs.

Finally, the State has made over \$120 million in other funding available to local school systems to assist with the safe re-opening of schools within the last 12 months. All of this funding is above and beyond regular state education aid provided to schools in FY 22.