



Background

This document aims to inform California's K-12 schools of COVID-19 testing strategies for the 2022-2023 school year. It is intended to support planning processes for safe in-person learning, as disease management is an essential priority to maintain student well-being and development.

Testing Framework:

Testing for COVID-19 remains an essential tool to decrease transmission, keep students and staff safe, and keep schools open for in-person instruction while mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please refer to the [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools to Support Safe In-Person Learning, 2022-2023 School Year](#) for more specific information on when and who to test in a school setting. This information is being incorporated into this framework by reference.

Getting Tested for COVID-19:

Testing remains a key mitigation layer to detect and curb transmission of COVID-19. Schools are encouraged to ensure access to COVID-19 testing for students and staff, particularly for vulnerable communities. Schools should review support and resources offered by the [California COVID-19 Testing Task Force](#), as well as those available through healthcare insurers, local, and federal sources.

1. Recommended Actions:

- a. CDPH recommends that antigen tests be considered the primary option for detecting COVID-19 in schools, compared to PCR tests. For more information, see the [Testing Framework for K-12 Schools](#).
- b. Due to the increased travel and social interactions that often occur during school-breaks, it is recommended that students and staff get tested for COVID-19 prior to returning to school following major breaks (e.g., summer, winter, spring).
- c. Additional testing recommendations are referenced in relevant sections below.

Managing Individuals with Symptoms:

Recommended Actions:

a. K-12 schools are encouraged to develop standard criteria for managing students who develop symptoms of infectious diseases, including COVID-19. In most situations, any student who develops new, unexplained symptoms should not return to campus until it is clear that symptoms are mild and improving or are due to a non-infectious cause (e.g., allergies). This includes waiting until 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

b. Additionally, if [symptoms](#) are concerning for COVID-19, it is strongly recommended that students wear a mask and get tested immediately. Students should also follow [CDPH recommendations](#) for retesting and/or isolating if results are positive.

Managing Students Diagnosed with COVID-19:

Prompt management of students with COVID-19 can prevent further spread and, in some cases, allow for early treatment.

1. Recommended Action:

a. Students diagnosed with COVID-19 should follow recommendations listed in [Table 1 \(Persons with COVID-19\)](#) of CDPH's guidance for the general public, including staying home for at least 5 days and wearing a well-fitting mask around others for a total of 10 days, especially in indoor settings.

Managing Students Exposed to COVID-19:

Prompt notification to students and families regarding exposure to infectious diseases, including COVID-19, can allow for rapid testing, early treatment, and prevention of further spread.

1. Recommended Actions:

a. It is recommended that families notify schools if their child has COVID-19 and was on school grounds during their [infectious period](#), and that schools in turn notify students who spent more than a cumulative total of 15 minutes (within a 24-hour time period) in a shared indoor airspace (e.g., classroom) with someone with COVID-19 during their infectious period.

b. In lieu of individual exposure notifications, schools should consider providing a general notification to the entire school community during times of elevated [community transmission](#) of COVID-19. This communication can alert all to the increased potential of being exposed to COVID-19 due to a rise in cases among school and community members, and remind all to monitor for symptoms and get tested.

c. All students with known exposure to persons with COVID-19 should follow recommendations listed in [Table 2 \(Asymptomatic Persons Who are Exposed to Someone with COVID-19\)](#) of CDPH's guidance for the general public. If they remain without symptoms, students may continue to take part in all aspects of K–12 schooling including sports and extracurricular activities. As recommended in [Table 2](#), they should wear a well-fitting mask around others for a total of 10 days and get tested 3–5 days after last exposure.

The following are recommended practices for California districts, schools, and county offices of education:

- Identify a COVID Testing Point of Contact to facilitate communication and coordination with the CA Testing Task Force along with other relevant agencies or organizations that oversee school operations.
- Review and reference current testing recommendations provided in the [CDPH K-12 School COVID Guidance](#) and any additional recommendations or requirements provided by the Local Health Jurisdiction.
- Maintain situational awareness of the [testing resources and programs offered by the CA Testing Task Force](#) and monitor availability of pre-positioned testing resources housed with a County Office of Education or Local Health Jurisdiction for rapid distribution to schools.
- Monitor the [CDC's COVID Community Data Tracker](#) as a method of identifying when to increase or reestablish school testing operations.
- Communicate any questions, concerns, or additional operational testing resources/needs to the CA Testing Task Force at schooltesting@cdph.ca.gov

These updates and anticipated changes are based on current scientific knowledge and anticipated trends. The framework is subject to change. As noted in the [SMARTER plan](#), COVID-19 trends can shift rapidly and California's response to conditions in schools must remain nimble, adaptive, and responsive to dynamic challenges to keep students and staff safe.

Preliminary Testing Framework for K-12 Schools for the 2022–2023 School Year originally published on May 27, 2022.