

WESTCHESTER COUNTY SCHOOLS COVID-19 SCREENING TESTING PROGRAM
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of this form?

The County of Westchester, acting through the County Department of Health (“WCDH”), is sponsoring the Westchester County Schools COVID-19 Screening Testing Program (the “Program”) for all schools and school districts in Westchester County. The WCDH is sponsoring the Program, along with its lab testing partners: The Mount Sinai Hospital, Mirimus Inc. and Quadrant Biosciences, Inc. (“Testing Partners”) Your School District has opted to participate in the Program, which is a FREE COVID-19 PCR saliva testing for our schools’ teachers, students, and staff. You may reach out to Rosie Finizio, Westchester County Parent Liaison at 914-995-2501 or RFinizio@westchestergov.com or your student’s school if you have any questions.

- This FAQ gives you information about the Program, including the process for testing, the benefits and limitations of testing, how your private information will be protected, and the process for notifying you of test results.
- The County’s Testing Partners are subject to federal and state laws that require them to maintain the confidentiality of any personal information that you agree to give to them for the Program. Our Testing Partners take very seriously their obligation to protect your information, and they will not use or disclose your information other than as described herein, in the Authorization to Disclose Protected Health Information Form and as required or permitted under law or regulation.
- The Program is subject to the County’s receipt of funding from the Health Research, Inc. and federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to operate the Program.

What will happen once I consent to participate in this part of the Program?

- The County’s Testing Partners will test each saliva sample that they receive using testing platforms that are used to test for COVID-19 in labs across the country.
- The Testing Partners will test each sample, either individually or in a group (pool) with other samples. Group (pooled) samples that are positive for COVID-19 will then be tested individually to identify the positive sample. When a positive result is found, the individual (or their parent/guardian) and the individual’s school will be notified.

How does the testing process work?

- Once you give consent to participate in the Westchester County Schools COVID-19 Screening Testing Program, your student will give a small sample of saliva for each designated testing event, and that sample will be sent to a lab for testing. In some instances, saliva samples can be collected from the comfort and privacy of the home using pre-distributed test kits. Samples will be returned by your Student to the school on designated test days for transport to the labs. In some instances, saliva samples will be given under the supervision of the County’s Testing Partners’ trained staff. In all cases, sample collection events will be designed to protect the safety of all involved.
- If your student tests positive, you will be contacted with the result. The Testing Partners will also alert specific members of the school’s staff who have been instructed on how to protect your confidential information. These staff members will use test results only as necessary to prevent further spread within the school (ex: the teacher to determine which classmates were exposed) and will never share your Student’s name.

Why can't my student/I be tested if my student/I tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days?

- Individuals *may* continue to receive positive test results for up to 90 days after having COVID-19, even after they have recovered from their symptoms and are no longer contagious. By removing people who had a positive test result in the last 90 days from the testing program, we can avoid isolating people who are not actually contagious.
- Once 90 days have passed since your student's/your last positive COVID-19 test, your student/you will be included in the testing program.

How will you maintain my privacy rights?

- The County's Testing Partners are committed to protecting personal information, including your Student's test results, from inappropriate use, disclosure, or access. The law requires the County's Testing Partners to protect your student's personal information and they take that obligation seriously.
- In some cases, the samples will be labeled only with a barcode, and there will not be any identifying information (like your Student's name) visible on the sample itself. If barcodes are not used and personal information is written on the sample, testing personnel are trained to keep those samples confidential.
- Our Testing Partners and [district name] have agreed that your personal information will not be used or disclosed in any way except as described in this consent form, the Authorization to Disclose Protected Health Information Form, and as required or permitted under law or regulation.
- Our Testing Partners are required by law to notify government authorities of positive test results, including basic demographic information about the individuals tested. The same personal information requested on this form would be shared with the Department of Health by any doctor's office or testing center in the event of a positive result.
- Our testing partners have implemented strict physical and electronic protections against improper access to personal information that it collects and maintains, and they will keep your student's personal information according to those strict protocols.

Are there any possible risks of the testing program?

- The testing creates no health risks. The saliva-based tests are non-invasive, painless, and quick.
- Although the testing platforms that our testing partners use are highly accurate, no COVID-19 test is 100% accurate, and it is possible that your screening test will result in a false positive or a false negative. That means that if a screening test returns a positive result, it is possible that there is no COVID-19 infection, and if a screening test returns a negative result, it is possible that there is a COVID-19 infection.
- The results of screening tests alone are not sufficient to detect or rule out the possibility that an individual has been exposed to or is infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. There is a possibility that a screening test may produce false positive or false negative results.

What are the possible benefits of participating in the program?

- The Program is designed to help stop or slow the spread of COVID-19 in your school and beyond, by identifying COVID-19 infections quickly and helping those who test positive to safely isolate until they are well. By identifying COVID-19 infections quickly, before they have the chance to spread, the Program is designed to provide a safer environment for everyone.