



August 16, 2021

To: Superintendents, School Leaders, School Directors, School Administrators
Subject: Department of Health's COVID-19 Testing Program for K-12 Schools

On [June 23, 2021](#) and [July 15, 2021](#), the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) sent messages on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) regarding upcoming and available COVID-19 testing programs. Thank you for your patience as DOH finalized the details of this program.

We are pleased to announce that the DOH's COVID-19 school testing program is operational. To reiterate, DOH's COVID-19 school testing program is free and voluntary and is available for all K-12 schools, including public and non-public K-12 schools, charter schools, career and technical centers (CTCs), or intermediate units (IU) in the Commonwealth, apart from schools in Philadelphia County. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) received their own federal funding to implement a testing program.

DOH has entered into an agreement with [Concentric by Ginkgo Bioworks](#) (Ginkgo) to provide a menu of testing services and support at no cost to participating schools. Ginkgo will provide all necessary communication materials and consent forms for staff and parents and guardians of students to opt in to this free, voluntary testing program. At this time, the testing program is offering weekly pooled testing and on-demand individual diagnostic testing to participating K-12 schools across the Commonwealth. Again, there is no cost to schools who opt into this program.

This **free program can help keep classrooms open throughout the school year**. Regular testing — which takes ~10 minutes per classroom — can help schools safeguard staff and students as students return to full, in-person learning.

This **end-to-end testing program was designed to be easy for schools and fun for students**. It includes:

- On-site clinical support on test days and administrative support to alleviate testing burden
- Courier logistics and lab processing through labs in PA
- Easy to use customer support for the entirety of the program
- Fun educational content for students including comics and stickers



In order for a school to opt in to the DOH's COVID-19 school testing program, school leaders must complete the Statement of Assurances attached to this correspondence. Once completed and signed, please submit the Statement of Assurances form to RA-DHK12COVIDTEST@pa.gov.

We realize it's been a long and challenging year, **but there are a few easy steps you can take now to get ready for testing in the Fall:**

- [Learn more](#) about the program, which is used by more than 1,000 schools across 18 states
- Attend a live webinar this week. To register select a time below:
 - Tuesday 8/17 at [10-11am](#) or [1-2pm](#)
 - Wednesday 8/18 at [9-10am](#) or [2-3pm](#)
 - Thursday 8/19 at [11am-12pm](#) or [4-5pm](#)
 - Friday 8/20 at [12-1pm](#)
- Connect 1:1 with [Karen Hogan, PhD](#), PA K12 COVID Testing Program Lead, Ginkgo Bioworks

Thank you for all of the work you've done and your ongoing efforts to keep our children safe!

For further information regarding keeping schools safe, please see additional resources below.

[Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools | CDC](#)

[Open and Safe Schools](#)

[COVID-19 Educational Testing – Shah Family Foundation](#)