

Overview

What is the COVID-19 Testing Program?

HISD, the Houston Health Department and Fulgent Genetics are partnering to provide school-based COVID-19 testing. The free screening testing is voluntary and will be offered to students and staff. Students will only be tested if their parent/guardian provides consent. Screening testing will be offered to everyone even if they don't have symptoms of COVID-19.

Why is our school testing for COVID-19?

Regular testing is a safe, effective way to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and help keep our schools open for in-person learning. Many people with COVID-19, especially children and teens, don't have symptoms but can still spread the virus, so screening testing helps find infections before they spread to others. This is especially important for children who are unvaccinated, staff with younger children at home, and others who are not vaccinated or are otherwise at risk for getting seriously sick from COVID-19.

How were schools selected for the COVID-19 testing program?

Schools were selected to participate in the testing program by the Houston Health Department. The selection was based on a number of public health measures including COVID-19 community spread, positivity rate, and vaccination. Additional schools will be added to the testing program based on these public health measures and frequency of outbreaks.

How will the school protect privacy?

Testing results will be shared only for public health purposes, which may include notifying a COVID-19 positive individual to quarantine and identifying close contacts. Information sharing and notifying of contacts will be done in a way that protects your privacy. Sharing of information will only be done in accordance with state and federal law and policies protecting privacy.

Gathering Consent

What is the consent process?

The consent process is digital only and can be accessed through this website:

<https://bit.ly/HISDC19Test> The consent process must be completed before an individual can be tested. Consent is individual and site specific - meaning a student or staff member of a specific school can only be tested at that school.

How soon after a parent/guardian of a minor gives consent can the student get tested?

As soon as a parent/guardian of a minor gives consent the student is eligible to receive a test. A parent/guardian can consent to test the day-of testing as well.

How will a student or staff member be selected for testing?

All consented students and staff members will be selected for testing each week.

What if a parent/guardian of a minor, a student aged 18 or above, or a staff member previously consented to testing but no longer wishes to participate?

Participants or the guardians of participants can deactivate their profile by emailing: backtoschool@fulgentgenetics.com

How will a student's information be updated if they transfer schools?

Fulgent and HISD will work together to update the information on a regular basis.

Testing Eligibility

How soon after the digital consent is completed can the student or staff member be tested?

If Fulgent staff are on site, then the student or staff member is immediately eligible to be tested as soon as their consent form is completed. If Fulgent staff are not on site, the student or staff member will be eligible to be tested on the next Test Day.

A student without a consent form is at school and is showing symptoms of COVID, what can the school do?

Completion of digital consent is required for any student or staff member to be tested. School staff are welcome to share the process for granting consent with staff, students, or the parents/guardians of a minor. Once consent has been completed, the staff member or student is immediately eligible for testing.

How the testing program works

How will the testing be done?

These PCR tests are conducted with a short, shallow nose swab that only goes half to three-quarters of an inch into the nose and is rotated three times in each nostril. These are not nasopharyngeal swabs that collect specimen from deeper in the nasopharynx. The short, shallow swab is administered by a qualified medical professional from Fulgent Genetics.

Is the test reliable?

PCR tests detect the presence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and are highly accurate and considered the gold standard by the CDC.

Will my school's testing window change?

To the extent possible, Fulgent will keep a school's scheduled testing window consistent. However, not every school is scheduled for testing every week. Therefore, schools will often have the same schedule on Week 1 and Week 3, and the same schedule on Week 2 and Week 4. All other scheduling changes will be limited as much as possible.

How frequently will students and staff be tested?

Screening testing will occur weekly or biweekly based on need.

When and where will the test be given?

Participating schools will designate an appropriate room or area on-campus that can accommodate a steady flow of testers. This area will be private.

Should our school nurse be the point of contact?

While a school nurse is certainly eligible to be a school's point of contact if they wish, we encourage schools to consider selecting another staff member to be the point of contact and collaborate with the school nurse.

How will a student get from the classroom to testing if they were selected?

Younger students will be escorted to the testing room by the point of contact. Older students will be called down to the testing room.

How will teachers, who cannot leave their classroom, be tested?

The point of contact will bring the specimen collection kit to the teacher, who will self-swab. Once completed, the point of contact will walk back to the testing area and give the specimen to the Fulgent testing staff.

Will staff and students miss work or instruction time if they get tested?

The Fulgent Genetics testing team will work quickly and efficiently to ensure that testing is not disruptive to students or staff.

Test Results

How will staff, students, and/or parents/guardians of minors learn their test results?

The consent process requires an email address or phone number - depending on which is provided, Fulgent will email or text a notification to staff, students and/or parents/guardians of minors when test results are ready to be accessed.

When and how will results be available?

The results of the test should be available within 24-48 hours. Fulgent Genetics will send a notification to staff, students or consenting parents/guardians to get their results through a secure online platform to get their test result.

Why are results not immediate?

Our testing program uses PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests that are analyzed in a certified laboratory. These tests do not provide immediate results.

How will the school nurse learn of positive test results?

School nurses will have access to Fulgent's system which will provide access to positive test results.

What happens if a student or staff member tests positive?

The school nurse should conduct contact tracing and follow the protocols for a positive test case.