



Test-to-Stay Program

On August 24, 2021, the Bay County Health Department established emergency procedures for gathering restrictions to be followed during the pandemic to protect the public health and ensure continuity of essential services, especially K-12 education.

Purpose:

The program allows a school to identify infectious persons and exclude them from further spreading the virus throughout the school environment and decrease the impact of a quarantine period by reducing missed school days.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can participate?

- Students or staff identified as a close contact to a positive COVID-19 case that are not experiencing any symptoms.
- Students that have a MDHHS Consent and Registration Form for Rapid COVID-19 Antigen Testing, signed by a parent/guardian.
- Whether a school has a universal indoor masking policy or not, students identified as close contacts who choose to participate in the Test-To-Stay program must wear a mask while indoors at school throughout the duration of the quarantine period.

When can students or staff participate in Test-to-Stay?

- For students identified as a close contact to a case at school: the day after receiving notification for the most recent exposure.
- For students identified as a close contact to a case at home: after the isolation end date for the most recently identified household case.

Who is implementing the program?

- The Bay County Health Department established the parameters of participation in the Test-to-Stay program as an alternative to quarantine. Testing is performed by school officials each day prior to school entry to students who choose to cooperate. Testing occurs days 1 through 5, 7, and 9. The testing schedule may be modified for weekends, holidays, etc. Test results (both positive and negative) are reported to BCHD and MDHHS, which is the supplier of testing materials.

Is participation in the Test-to-Stay program required?

- School participation is optional. The decision to participate is decided by the leadership at each of the schools with consideration of available staff and resources to carry out testing.
- Student participation is optional. A parent must provide consent for a student to be tested. A student who lacks consent for testing cannot be tested. If a parent declines to provide consent or a student declines to cooperate with testing, then the student will be excluded from school and will need to adhere to the usual quarantine requirements.

What if my child tests positive?

- If a student tests positive, the student must complete a 10-day isolation period beginning on the positive test date. Students participating in Test-to-Stay must be free of symptoms at the time of testing.



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When can my child safely return to school after testing positive?

- As a newly identified case, the student must complete a 10-day isolation period and must be fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication and their symptoms must have improved.

If my child's school is not doing Test-to-Stay, when can they safely return to school?

- For students identified as a close contact to a case at school: after quarantining for 10 days after the most recent exposure.
- For students identified as a close contact to a case at home: after quarantining for 10 days after the isolation end date for the most recently identified household case.

Who is considered a close contact?

- In schools with universal indoor masking, close contacts are anyone within 3 feet for 15 minutes or more during a 24-hour period.
- In schools without universal indoor masking, close contacts are anyone within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more during a 24-hour period.
- Students might also be identified as close contacts based on their participation in physical education, extra-curricular activities, after-school sports activities, and while riding a school bus.

What role, if any, does the National Guard have with administration of the Test-to-Stay Program?

- When case counts are high and the number of close contacts are also high, some schools might be overwhelmed by the number of students who require testing on any given morning. Schools can request assistance with testing from the Michigan National Guard. Under those circumstances, the Michigan National Guard will function as school officials for the purposes of overseeing, administering, and reporting student test results.

How did BCHD develop its testing schedule for the Test-to-Stay Program?

- The testing schedule for BCHD's Test-To-Stay program (see [link](#)) in consultation with [Dr. Michael Mina](#) of Harvard University (see [link](#), [link](#), and [link](#)), who is a subject matter expert regarding rapid antigen testing, recommended we perform daily testing for days 1 through 5. Research conducted by the [University of Florida](#) and published in [JAMA](#) demonstrated that over 8% of high school students ended up testing positive on days 8-14 after exposure. Hence, testing all close contacts on days 7 and 9 is also crucial. If day 5 (or day 7) occurs on a Sunday, then the testing schedule should be adjusted to test on day 6 (or day 8). Participating in Test-To-Stay is a quarantine alternative for those who choose to cooperate with serial testing, and we discontinue testing on day 9 to coincide with our 10 day duration of quarantine.