

## Oneida County COVID-19 Test to Stay Protocol for the Westmoreland Central School District

### **Summary:**

Test to Stay (TTS) is a modified, test-based protocol for asymptomatic K-12 students and faculty who are exposed to a positive COVID-19 case. TTS allows these individuals to attend and work at school if they receive a negative [COVID-19 viral test](#) (e.g. rapid antigen, PCR) at three different times during what would have been the five day quarantine period. The tests must be administered at the start of each school day.

### **Individual Eligibility:**

To participate in the TTS protocol, the individual must have been exposed to a positive COVID-19 case and the following criteria must be met.

- The infected individual and the individual exposed through close contact must have [consistently and correctly worn well-fitting masks](#) during the close contact exposure(s).
- The TTS participant must not have or develop any [signs or symptoms of COVID-19](#) at any time since their close contact exposure(s).
  - Parents of participating students whose household contacts have signs or symptoms of COVID-19 should not send their child to school and instead contact the school nurse.
- Correctly wear well-fitting masks in school at all times, other than when eating or drinking. When these individuals cannot be masked, they must maintain **6 feet** of distance from other individuals.
- Closely adhere to all [COVID-19 mitigations measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) that have been adopted by the school.
- The exposed person must be tested a minimum of three times (however, WCS may opt to test more frequently) during the first 5 days following the exposure, unless the recognition of the exposure is delayed or weekends or school breaks intervene. The five-day period is measured in calendar days where the last date of exposure is considered day zero. The first test should be done as soon as possible after exposure is identified (the first day the student is in school following the identified exposure). The first test will be on day 0 or 1, the second test will be on day 2 or 3 and the third test will be on day 5. Parents will be asked to transport their children to school for the testing the morning of the test because they wouldn't be able to take school district transportation prior to receiving a negative test result that morning. If the test is negative the student will be able to remain in school that day and take a bus home. They will also be able to take a bus to school each morning until the morning of the next scheduled test. A schedule of the testing days will be provided on the first day of testing. Testing for students in grades 7-12 will take place 7:00-7:45 in the HS nurse's office and testing

for students in Pre-K to 6 will take place 8:00-8:45 each morning in the elementary school's nurse's offices. Other testing times can be arranged by calling the nurse's offices.

- On days when school instruction is not taking place, testing is not required. Once the individual is released from quarantine, testing is no longer required.
  - If the individual's qualifying close contact exposure becomes known during the school day, the child must receive a negative viral test result before departing on a school bus.
  - If the individual's qualifying close contact exposure becomes known outside the school day, the individual will be expected to receive a test the next morning.
- The TTS participant or parent/guardian must agree to do the following for the individual to be eligible.
  - Conduct active monitoring (explicitly asking the individual about signs and symptoms of COVID-19) each day before and after school.
  - Immediately contact a healthcare provider and OCHD at 315-798-5431 if any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 develop.
  - Refrain from attending school if any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 develop in the individual or anyone in the home.
  - If the participating individual tests positive or develops signs or symptoms of COVID-19 during school instruction they must leave school immediately.
  - ***Sign a consent form to allow testing to take place in the school***
- Not be associated with a COVID-19 cluster or outbreak, as determined by OCHD.

Participants are strongly advised to receive their tests at school on the three days specified, however, if the parents or guardians would prefer to administer home tests, the following requirements exist:

- The school must be provided with test documentation including the brand name of the test, name of the individual tested and their date of birth, the date the specimen was collected, type of test, and the result.
- Proof that the individual in the testing protocol was tested that morning (the proof could be a picture with a date and time, a signed attestation from the parent or guardian, etc).

**If WCS doesn't have an adequate supply of tests to fulfill this requirement, the TTS stay procedures would be suspended until adequate testing can be obtained. If this were to occur, the quarantine and/or isolation procedure would revert back to those defined by the Oneida County Department of Health and/or the New York State Department of Health**

In addition, WCS will

- Report results to New York State Department of Health's Electronic Clinical Laboratory Reporting System (ECLRS), in accordance with all rules and regulations.
- Obtain permission from the individual or parent/ guardian to participate in the protocol.

- Assess participating individuals for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 upon arrival at school each day. If an individual presents with signs or symptoms, they will immediately be isolated, and arrangements made to send the participant home.
- Accept negative test results for individuals in the protocol who tested elsewhere if they present documentation to include the individual's name, testing location, specimen collection date, type of test, and test result.
- Immediately isolate any individual that tests positive and ensure appropriate transportation from school.
- Monitor participating individuals for consistent and correct mask use throughout the school instructional day, including during bus transportation.

The WCS TST program will be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure proper mitigation strategies are employed and that the program is successful. To do this an evaluation team, consisting of the following individuals will be established to evaluate the program:

- A representative from the School District Administration
- A school nurse involved with the District Test to Stay program
- A parent or individual who participated in the Test to Stay Program
- A representative from OCHD
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The evaluation team will review, at a minimum:

- The number of in-person learning days saved
- The proportion of participating individuals who test positive for COVID-19 during their modified quarantine.
- The number/proportion of possible cases of secondary transmission in the school.
- The participation rate among eligible individuals.
- Results from a convenience sample of parents who did not allow their individual to participate to identify knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about the protocol.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**When individuals are participating in the Test to Stay protocol, do they have to wear masks when outdoors?**

Yes. Other than individuals with a medical exemption, individuals who are participating in the protocol must always wear masks, unless they are eating or drinking, including when outdoors.

**For the Test to Stay protocol, is there a specific time of day that the tests need to occur?**

Yes, WCS will conduct the tests prior to the individual attending class.

**Is the Test to Stay protocol available to both students and staff?**

Yes, TTS is available to students and staff in WCS.

**Do schools need permission to test individual s for COVID-19?**

Yes. Before a COVID-19 test is administered to an individual, WCS must get written permission from the participant or parent/guardian.

**Can individuals who are fully vaccinated or have recently recovered from COVID-19 infection participate in TTS?**

Since in general, these individuals would not be expected to quarantine, they would not need to participate in TTS to attend school.

**How long will the TTS last?**

The evaluation team will review the effectiveness, feasibility, and scalability of the protocol. This information will be used to make recommendations as to whether the program should be amended, expanded to other school districts/private schools and/or be withdrawn.