



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CENTERS FOR DISEASE
CONTROL AND PREVENTION

October 7, 2024

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for your continued dedication to keeping students and staff safe and schools open for in-person learning. Infection rates from COVID-19, influenza, and other respiratory viruses are typically higher during the fall and winter months. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 – and to support strong school attendance so that students can safely learn in person – the U.S. Department of Education (ED), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is pleased to offer free, rapid, at-home COVID-19 tests to interested local educational agencies (LEAs).

LEAs, including public school districts and public charter school districts, may request over-the-counter rapid antigen COVID-19 self-tests **free of charge** for their students, families, staff, and school communities. These self-tests are easy to use and can play an important role in containing the spread of the virus in schools and communities. We encourage LEAs to make use of this free COVID-19 test offering, which schools may use, for example, to stock school nurses' offices and main offices with tests; to send test kits home with students or parents; or to distribute within their communities to put these valuable safeguards in the hands of students, parents, and staff who need them.

Everyone can take steps to prevent illness from spreading and keep up consistent, regular school attendance. As respiratory virus season approaches, we remind all school and district leaders to review the latest information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses in schools, including recommendations on testing, with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website, [Preventing Spread of Infections in K-12 Schools](#). The guidance includes everyday actions that schools can take to prevent and control the spread of respiratory and stomach viruses, such as influenza and norovirus, and bacterial illness, such as strep throat.

Districts and schools are encouraged to share resources with parents on how to keep kids healthy and in school so that they benefit from in-person instruction and supportive relationships. The [CDC](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [Attendance Works](#) and the [National Association of School Nurses](#), and other organizations offer resources to help parents navigate whether to send kids to school and how to support consistent school attendance while also preventing the spread of illness. As always, districts should regularly inform parents about their health and attendance policies, and parents should speak to their pediatricians with questions about their child's health.

Additionally, the CDC recommends everyone ages 6 months and older receive updated [2024-2025 COVID-19 and flu vaccines](#). Vaccines are the best defense against viruses that can cause serious illness and are updated to protect against the viruses in communities this season. Families can go to [Vaccines.gov](#), review the CDC's webpage on [Immunizations for Respiratory Viruses Prevention](#), or talk with their child's doctor to get started.

Thank you again for all you do to provide safe and healthy learning environments for students. Our agencies remain committed to partnering with school leaders to support everyday school attendance and keep school communities healthy.

Sincerely,

Miguel A. Cardona, Ed.D.
U.S. Secretary of Education

Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Attachment

ATTACHMENT

All up-to-date information about COVID-19 test availability for local educational agencies (LEAs) can be found at www.ed.gov/coronavirus.

To participate in the COVID-19 Testing Supply Program, LEAs must complete a one-time registration at this link: <https://protect-ows.hhs.gov/secure-upload/forms/fajrgxgrqtahgsvrl5wwzz4tuw>. Before registering, LEAs should designate a single point of contact (POC) who will be responsible for ordering the COVID-19 self-test kits and managing their delivery and dissemination for the district. No other entities or individuals should access the registration link. When registering online, the designated POC is required to provide basic information, including, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) LEA ID, LEA Name, and LEA Physical Address. All submissions must be verified. Therefore, please make sure that your LEA's information matches the information in our system at <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>.

Once registered, POCs are required to review training materials that provide instructions on how to access COVID-19 self-tests at no cost within the HHS Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response's Health Partner Ordering Portal (HPOP). LEAs will be able to order COVID-19 tests while supplies last. If your district registered last year, then do not re-register. Your district's POC can simply log into HPOP and order test kits. If you need to update your POC, email the name, title, email address, and direct phone number of the new designated POC for your LEA to covidresponse@ed.gov. ED staff will update your POC in HPOP and send an activation link to enable ordering.

If you have any issues accessing HPOP, please send an email describing the challenge that you are experiencing to covideresponse@ed.gov. Individual nonpublic schools, institutes of higher education, community-based organizations (e.g., expanded learning providers), and IDEA Part C providers are encouraged to partner with a district to order on their behalf.

Orders will be shipped directly to a single designated delivery address within the school district and should arrive within approximately 14-20 business days from the date that the order is placed.

View the Fall and Winter Virus Season Immunization Guide below to know which vaccines are recommended.

COVID-19 and Flu Updated 2024-25 Vaccines

Everyone 6 months and older

RSV Immunization to Protect Babies

Vaccine

Pregnant parents during weeks 32-36 of pregnancy during RSV season

OR

Monoclonal Antibodies

Babies entering or born during the RSV season

RSV Vaccine for Older Adults
(currently, older adults only need to get the RSV vaccine once; not annually)

People ages 60 and over at high risk of severe RSV

AND

Everyone ages 75 and older

cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/immunizations.html

CDC

The infographic features illustrations of diverse people: a family with a child in a wheelchair, a pregnant woman, and a group of older adults. The CDC logo is in the bottom right corner.