

Overview of COVID-19 Testing in the Education Sector

COVID-19 testing continues to evolve as healthcare and public health professionals adapt their approaches and learn from developing best practices. The following information supplements the testing recommendations in the [Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools](#) document issued by the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD).

As more scientific data is gathered and as technologies and testing systems evolve, SCCPHD recommendations for COVID-19 testing may change. It is important to remember that changes in guidance do not mean the previous guidance was wrong; rather, changes are based on having better information and tools in the rapidly evolving testing sector.

For the purpose of the guidelines below, “testing” refers to molecular, diagnostic tests (e.g., Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction - RT-PCR or PCR), rather than antigen or antibody testing. SCCPHD currently has no recommendations for testing methods other than the PCR nasal swab process.

SCCPHD issued an enhanced Healthcare Facilities Testing Accountability [Public Health Order](#) on September 16, 2020 (“Testing Order”). Under the Testing Order, people working in the education sector who have frequent interactions with students or the public are considered essential workers. The education sector includes public and private childcare establishments, public and private pre-kindergarten programs, public and private primary and secondary schools, and public and private colleges and universities. The Testing Order requires large health systems (such as Kaiser or Palo Alto Medical Foundation) to:

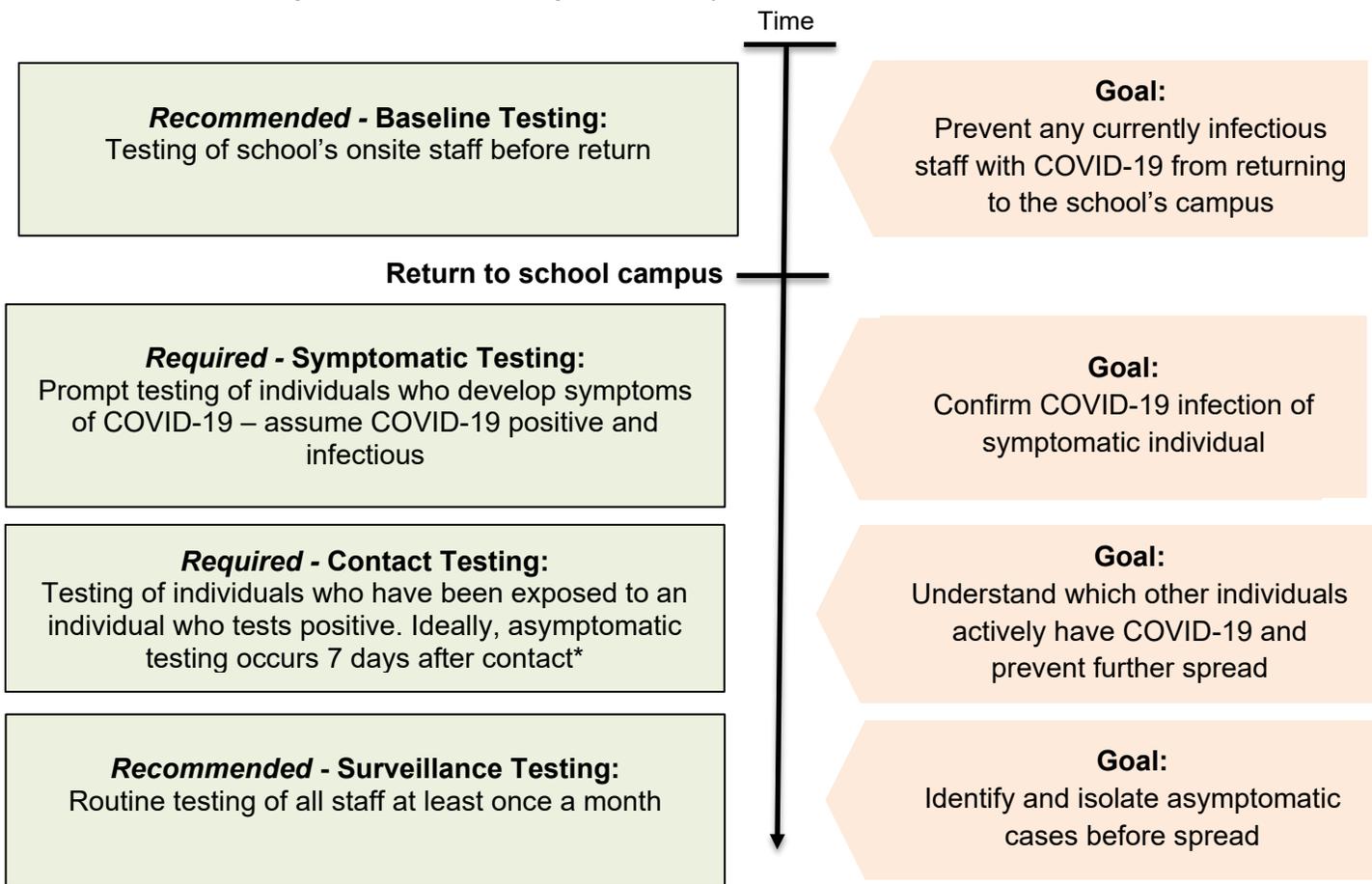
- Provide essential workers with PCR COVID-19 diagnostic testing within three business days of the essential worker requesting it;
 - (Essential workers can request to be tested up to once every fourteen calendar days.)
- Provide the results within three calendar days;
- Provide clear notice to patients regarding how to access COVID-19 Diagnostic testing; and
- Ensure that accessing COVID-19 diagnostic testing is easy and straightforward.

COVID-19 Testing Requirements and Recommendations

Individuals who develop symptoms of COVID-19 and those who have been in close contact with an individual who tests positive are required to get a COVID-19 test. SCCPHD recommends that educators and other school staff that are working on site and have frequent interactions with students or the public to test prior to returning to a site, as well as to participate in routine testing at least once a month.

For individuals who have previously tested positive, it is likely that they will continue to test positive for up to 90 days with PCR testing, even though they are no longer infectious. Therefore testing is not recommended during this period. After the 90 day time period, a person with COVID-like symptoms, may be retested following a physician's evaluation.

Routine testing for students is being reviewed by SCCPHD.



*If tested too soon after exposure, a false-negative test result is a possibility. If an asymptomatic person tests less than 3 days after contact, it is recommended that they test again 7-10 days after contact.

Access to Testing

SCCPHD recommends that educators and other school staff that are working on site and have frequent interactions with students or the public should first attempt to access baseline and routine testing through their healthcare provider. Asymptomatic essential workers that are unable to receive testing from their healthcare provider can inform SCCPHD by going to [sccCOVIDconcerns.org](https://www.sccCOVIDconcerns.org) and providing information about their experience.

As a second option, SCCPHD offers free testing at each city in the county one to two weekdays a month. These sites are appointment-based to support a fast testing experience. The Fairgrounds site offers appointment-based, drive-through testing and is open seven days a week. In addition, the County of Santa Clara offers two testing sites where individuals without symptoms can be tested without an appointment. These locations are typically in East San Jose and Gilroy. Details for each testing site and upcoming testing dates can be found at [SCCFreeTest.org](https://www.sccFreeTest.org).

Educational entities can also choose to contract with a private vendor to provide on-site routine surveillance testing.

COVID-19 Testing: The Basics

There are three classifications of tests that are associated with COVID-19: Molecular (PCR); Antigen; and Antibody. The characteristics of the tests are [highlighted here](#).

COVID-19 Testing Resources

[COVID-19 Testing Task Force Lab List](#) (California Testing Task Force)

[FAQs on Testing for SARS-CoV-2](#) (US Food and Drug Administration)

[In Vitro Diagnostics EUAs](#) (FDA Approved Emergency Use Authorizations)

[SARS-CoV-2 Reference Panel Comparative Data](#) (Table 2 Sensitivity Mean Estimates)

[PLAYBOOK to Stand Up Community-Based Testing Sites](#) (California Department of Health Valencia Regional Laboratory)