



COUNTY OF ERIE

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Erie County Department of Health COVID-19 “Test to Stay” Protocols

Pursuant to its authority under New York Public Health Law and related regulations, and in connection with the New York State Department of Health memorandum concerning Revised Updated Testing and Quarantine Supplemental Information to the “Interim NYSDOH Guidance for Classroom Instruction in P-12 Schools During the 2021-2022 Academic Year,” dated December 23, 2021, the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) has determined that schools in Erie County may implement “Test to Stay” (TTS), subject to the approval of ECDOH and compliance with the requirements set forth below. ECDOH is therefore establishing the following requirements for the implementation of TTS in Erie County.

This communication is intended to set forth ECDOH’s policy and expectations for schools in the implementation of TTS throughout Erie County. Schools should review the NYSDOH guidance closely and consult their counsel for legal advice.

In Erie County, Test to Stay is defined as follows: P-12 students, teachers and staff who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and who are identified as close contacts due to COVID-19 exposure while in a school or community setting (household exposures do not qualify for TTS) may attend in-person classes (instruction/academic periods), even while under mandatory quarantine orders, if:

- (1) the person is symptom free,
- (2) the school has received consent for the person to undergo testing,
- (3) the person is tested a minimum of two times during the five-day period following exposure, unless recognition of the exposure is delayed or weekends or school breaks intervene. One of the tests must occur on day five.

Test to Stay is available to Erie County P-12 students, teachers and staff.

In the classroom school setting, a close contact is someone who is less than 3 feet away from an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes of a 24-hour period. In non-classroom school settings and/or any setting where masks are not consistently properly worn (e.g., lunch room, bus), a close contact is someone less than 6 feet away from an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes of a 24-hour period.

Fully vaccinated students, teachers and staff, and those who have been infected with COVID-19 within the last 90 days (tested positive using a viral test) who are identified as close contacts can continue to attend school.

In-classroom activities: All fully vaccinated* individuals (students, teachers, and staff), who have been exposed to an individual with COVID-19 may continue to attend or work at school, regardless of booster status, while quarantined outside of school. Continued attendance applies only to participation in classroom activities and taking the bus to and from school.

*Fully vaccinated is defined as two weeks after the receipt of either two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of Johnson and Johnson vaccine or full course of any other recognized vaccine.

Extracurricular or after school activities: Individuals 12 years and older who are eligible for a booster but not boosted, and who have been exposed to an individual with COVID-19, cannot participate in extracurricular or after school activities and, aside from school attendance for instruction and bus travel, must adhere to a 5-day quarantine at home. Fully vaccinated 5-11-year-old children are not eligible for a booster and have no further restrictions.

Students, teachers, and staff who are not vaccinated or have not completed a primary vaccine series who came into close contact with someone with COVID-19 should quarantine for at least 5 days (day 0 through day 5) after their last close contact. These individuals are eligible for the Test to Stay program, allowing them to stay in the school setting during the quarantine period. Outside the school setting, quarantine recommendations apply.

More information can be found here:

https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/01/IsolationQuarantineGuidance_01.13.22_0.pdf

To ensure the opportunity to participate in TTS is available at every school in Erie County and consistency in administration of quarantine and isolation review responsibilities under New York Public Health Law and related regulations, ECDOH is adopting TTS on a County-wide basis. To facilitate that implementation, each school or district participating in TTS must have a written procedure that adopts the following TTS protocols:

- The exposure must have occurred in the school setting and while both the person with COVID-19 (index patient) and exposed person were consistently and properly masked.
- The exposed person remains asymptomatic; if the exposed person who is allowed to remain in school through TTS develops symptoms, they must be immediately excluded from school per current school guidance. In addition to a negative nucleic acid amplification (NAAT) test or antigen test, symptomatic individuals must be well enough to participate in school, not have runny nose or cough severe enough to make mask wear difficult or unhygienic, be fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever reducing medication, and meet other school or district requirements to return to school after a non-COVID illness.
- The exposed person is tested a minimum of two times during the five-day period following exposure, unless recognition of the exposure is delayed or weekends or school breaks intervene. One of the tests must occur on day five. If day five falls on a weekend or school holiday, the test should be performed the next school day.
- The five-day period is measured in calendar days where the last date of exposure is considered day 0. The first test should be done as soon as possible after exposure is identified (i.e., the first day the student is in school after identified exposure).
- Adjustments should be made to account for weekends and other non-school days, in which case a test should be conducted on the first school day back and continue thereafter. Schools/districts also have the option of conducting additional tests at their discretion.

- Considers equity (i.e., families should not have to pay for testing, or if they do, then the inability to pay should not prevent a student from being eligible for TTS). NYS is making rapid COVID-19 antigen tests available to counties at no charge.
- Includes actions to follow-up on transmission (e.g., contact tracing) in the event that an individual tests COVID-19 positive.
- The test must be conducted—and the results received—before the school day begins, and positive individuals excluded/isolated per existing procedures.
- Designation of where the tests will be conducted. **NOTE:** ECDOH requires that TTS testing be conducted on school grounds, and not elsewhere. Home testing is not permitted for TTS.
- The exposed person who is allowed to remain in school through TTS must be quarantined outside of school instruction/academic periods (on weekends/holidays when the seven-day TTS period is still active, but no school test is required; after school/evenings; no community activities or extracurricular participation including clubs, sports, arts/performance activities, etc.). Please note that people participating in TTS are allowed to continue to ride the school bus following all existing guidance, including required masking. However, ECDOH strongly recommends that parents/guardians provide personal transportation for students in TTS.

Schools must also adhere to the following:

- While ECDOH and NYSDOH will be supplying the tests to be used for TTS, it is the responsibility of participating schools to arrange for test pickup with ECDOH.
- Obtain and store parental consent for TTS participation for the duration of the program.
- Supply and meet requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) and biohazard waste removal procedures.
- Ensure that those conducting the TTS tests are properly trained.
- Maintain a Limited Service Laboratory (LSL) and a medical director.
- Report test results daily to ECLRS and NYSDOH Report Card.
- Report all positive test results daily to ECDOH.
- Report daily to ECDOH using designated TTS spreadsheet which will be provided.
- Provide ECDOH with a timely list of all close contacts of positive cases i.e., 1-2 days after schools case is identified.
- Keep updated contact information with ECDOH at all times, which will include one main contact and one backup contact per school district or private/charter school.

ECDOH may adjust TTS policy at any time and will communicate any changes to schools.

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