Test to Stay Implementation Checklist for Schools

Test to Stay is a strategy that allows asymptomatic school-based close contacts who are not up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations to remain in school during their quarantine period. It combines contact tracing and testing (testing that is repeated at least twice during a seven-day period after last close contact with a person with COVID-19) to allow some students, teachers and staff who should quarantine to continue in-person learning. This includes people who are a school-associated close contact, are not up to date with their vaccinations, do not test positive for SARS-CoV-2, and have no symptoms. TTS participants should get tested at least upon notification of their close contact and again on 5-7 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19.

Action Steps for K-12 School Districts

☐ **Develop a Protocol.** Clearly outline how the Test to Stay (TTS) strategy will be implemented within schools. It should include, but is not limited to, the following:
- o Eligibility criteria for participation: Describe whether unvaccinated and partially vaccinated students, teachers, and staff are eligible to participate in TTS. Additionally, define a close contact and whether correct and consistent mask use is required at the time of exposure. Clearly define whether participation in TTS is limited to those individuals only exposed in the school setting.
- o Consent process: Outline the parent/guardian consent process and whether it is opt-in or opt-out. The consent process should include plain language communication materials available in languages that reflect the school community.
- o Testing protocol and logistics: Outline how often tests will be done (e.g., testing on days 1 and 5 only; testing every day), location of testing, who will perform the testing, when testing will occur, and how individuals will be notified of test results.
- o Data collection requirements and templates: Outline the data elements (i.e., number of people eligible to participate in TTS, number of participants who test positive, etc.) that should be collected along with a data collection template.
- o Reporting: Determine the requirements for reporting TTS information to local or state public health officials.

☐ **Identify Testing Resources.** Ensure adequate testing resources are in place (personal protective equipment, testing kits, designated spaces for testing and storage of supplies, and staff) prior to implementation. Testing resources for schools are available through Operation Expanded Testing (OpET) and the ELC Reopening Schools supplement. Schools also received $130 billion in ESSER funds under the American Rescue Plan which may be used to arrange for testing and testing-related services; additional resources are available from Open and Safe Schools. Additionally, the Administration is making available an additional 10 million tests available for schools per month – with 5 million free, point-of-care rapid tests per month that states can request on behalf of school districts, and an additional 5 million lab-based tests per month that schools and districts can request directly through Operation ET. For additional information on available testing resources please refer to the accompanying TTS Guide for States document.

☐ **Develop a Case Identification and Contact Tracing Protocol.** Outline steps that staff will take when there is a confirmed case. Confirm that the schools have designated staff to support case identification and contact tracing activities, such as creation of lists of exposed students and staff, submission of these lists to the local health department if required, and notification of exposed people.

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☐ **Designate a Test to Stay Point of Contact.** Each school should designate a person to be the primary point of contact for TTS.

☐ **Train Staff.** Develop a plan to train staff on the implementation of TTS. This includes familiarizing staff on the school's TTS protocol, how to collect specimens, how to collect data, how to [identify cases](#), and how to conduct [contact tracing](#).

☐ **Educate Families.** Educate families on how TTS will work. Develop a communication plan that will effectively communicate the eligibility criteria for participation, how often tests will be done, testing locations, and additional COVID-19 prevention measures. Individuals participating in TTS should follow [CDC quarantine](#) recommendations outside of the school setting. Ensure parents are aware of the need to follow CDC's quarantine recommendations outside of school.

☐ **Ensure Testing of TTS Participants.** Develop a plan to track close contacts who are participating in TTS, their testing dates, and test results. This plan should include steps to take if they do not appear for repeat testing.

☐ **Use Masks.** Close contacts who are enrolled in TTS have been exposed to COVID-19 and should wear a well-fitting [mask](#) indoors for 10 full days following their exposure. Consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks while they take part in TTS can prevent further transmission of COVID-19 in the school setting.

☐ **Collect Data on Test to Stay.** Schools should collect data to track TTS enrollment and outcomes. Data elements that schools should collect on TTS include, but are not limited to:

For each close contact participating in TTS:
- o Demographics and contact information
- o Last date of exposure to a person with COVID-19 (Day 0)
- o Parental consent for TTS obtained
- o Dates TTS testing occurred
- o Each test result
- o Whether contact developed symptoms

For school's overall TTS program:
- o Total number of close contacts identified
- o Total number of close contacts eligible for TTS
- o Total number of close contacts that participated in TTS
- o Total number of TTS participants that tested positive within 10 days after date of last exposure

☐ **Ensure Equitable Access**. TTS is an important strategy to preserve in-person education, including in under-resourced communities. Health departments and school districts should work together to streamline approaches to implement TTS to ensure equitable participation across school districts and families.