

Saliva surveillance testing

Frequently asked questions

Last updated: December 18, 2020

Note: This document provides answers to questions families may have about the saliva surveillance testing that will be taking place in CCSD 89 schools. This document will be updated as needed.

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Why is the district testing students and staff?

Surveillance testing can provide an additional layer of safety in our schools. The testing has several goals:

- Give families data about district-specific transmission rates.
- Identify potential cases of COVID-19 in the school, particularly among people who are not showing symptoms. Asymptomatic people can spread COVID-19 without realizing they are positive.
- Decrease overall community rates by alerting students or staff who need to quarantine. The families of students who receive a “clinically significant finding” would also be able to take steps to reduce spread.
- In other districts that have used surveillance testing, it has allowed for consistent in-person learning.

The testing does not erase the need for other mitigation. All mitigation practices (masks, social distancing, frequent sanitization, hand washing/sanitizing, self-certification tickets) would still be required when schools open for in-person learning.

Staff will also have access to Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests, which can quickly confirm a diagnosis of COVID-19. This would allow symptomatic staff members to receive quick, diagnostic results. Symptomatic staff members who are negative for COVID-19 could then return to the classroom more quickly, reducing the need for substitute teachers and minimizing disruptions.

What test is the district using?

CCSD 89 will be administering an RT-LAMP test made by SafeGuard Surveillance LLC (www.safeguardscreeningllc.com). The test uses a small amount of saliva to indicate the potential presence of COVID-19.

Research on the RT-LAMP COVID-19 detection (the type of test used by SafeGuard):

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S266605392030014X>

<https://stm.sciencemag.org/content/12/556/eabc7075>

<https://bit.ly/3r91hXa>

How reliable is this test?

The surveillance test gives a false positive less than 1 percent of the time and a false negative only 6 percent of the time. Students or staff would have to quarantine or get a PCR test, which is considered a confirmation. SafeGuard has not yet had any false positives.

Some people with very low viral loads may not be picked up by the RT-LAMP screening. Scientific evidence suggests that people with very low viral loads are a low risk to spread the virus to others.

The SafeGuard results have been validated in studies published at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Colorado, and international institutions.

Are any other districts using this test?

This testing is being successfully used in multiple schools, including Glen Ellyn District 41, New Trier High School, and LaGrange District 102. Several other districts have indicated they will also be using the SafeGuard test after January 1.

What happens to the saliva after it is tested? Will any data be stored?

CCSD 89 staff created randomized bar-code labels that will be placed on each vial by CCSD 89 staff prior to the student completing the test. SafeGuard will report findings related to that bar-code to the school nursing staff. The school staff will then match the bar-code to the student's name. At no time will SafeGuard know the name of the student or staff member associated with the sample.

SafeGuard uses an RT-LAMP surveillance screening process developed by Dr. Ed Campbell. You can read more about RT-LAMP COVID-19 detection here: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S266605392030014X>
<https://stm.sciencemag.org/content/12/556/eabc7075>
<https://bit.ly/3r91hXa>

The district's contract with SafeGuard specifies that after the sample is completed, the remainder of the saliva is destroyed. No further testing is run on the saliva by SafeGuard or the district. No information related to anything besides the COVID-19 testing will be collected or tested by SafeGuard or the district.

The district will publish overall positivity rates by the district as a whole. No student name would be published or made available to other students through the school or SafeGuard.

Who is running the test?

When students are in school, nurses will administer the tests in areas where there are no other students using the same area.

Collection will be done in an open area with all students at least 10 feet apart. Staff will be wearing proper personal protective equipment and custodial staff will wipe down the area between each sample. Students would not come in contact with any other student's saliva sample.

What is the difference between a clinically significant finding and a positive test?

The SafeGuard tests indicate the potential presence of COVID-19 with a “clinically significant finding.” It is not a diagnosis of COVID-19. The SafeGuard test has high sensitivity and specificity. However, because samples are de-identified results are reported as a “finding of potential clinical significance”. A student or staff member who receives this response will still need a PCR test to confirm a diagnosis.

What happens if there is a clinically significant finding?

CCSD 89 staff created randomized bar-code labels that will be placed on each vial prior to the student completing the test. SafeGuard will report findings on the bar code to the school.

Only CCSD 89 staff will then be able to match the clinically significant finding test with the name of the student or staff member. At no time will SafeGuard know the name of the student or staff member associated with the sample.

The family of the student who has a clinically significant finding would be contacted by the school nurse. The student would have to quarantine and the nurse can provide further support and information. Students or staff who have a clinically significant finding would be quarantined out of the building and would need a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test for a diagnosis.

With testing in place, does that mean students won't have to wear masks?

Masks and all other mitigation practices (social distancing, frequent sanitization, hand washing/sanitizing, self-certification tickets) will still be required when schools are open for in-person learning. Schools will be cleaned throughout the day with a focus on high-touch areas.

Students or staff who are positive for COVID-19, students or staff who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, and students or staff who have been in contact with a person who was positive for COVID-19 will still be temporarily excluded from school, based on the Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines. (<https://bit.ly/2GcPRz7>)

This test is an additional layer of mitigation for staff and students. It should not change anyone's safety practices in or out of school.

Will students be required to test?

All students and staff who intend to return for in-person learning must complete at least one test before returning to the building. Students who do not wish to participate in the testing will be able to learn remotely.

How long will the district be doing surveillance testing?

The district has initially committed to four weeks of testing. This includes two weeks of testing for all staff and in-person students on January 4/5 and January 11, followed by two weeks of weekly testing.

Surveillance testing is recommended when there are high rates of transmission within the community. DuPage County has been in substantial transmission since October 12.

After the initial four weeks, the district will evaluate whether to continue testing based on school data as well as community transmission rates.

Why can't samples be collected at home?

The district is requiring that student samples be collected at schools. This ensures that the correct sample ends up in the correct vial. It also ensures that students have not had anything to eat or drink 30 minutes before the test. It also ensures that the correct amount of saliva is collected and samples are handled safely for accurate results.

Collection will be done in an open area with all students at least 10 feet apart. Staff will be wearing proper personal protective equipment and custodial staff will wipe down the area between each sample. Students would not come in contact with any other student's saliva sample.

Will students lose a lot of class time for the testing?

Students will be called to the testing area individually during the school day at a time when staff can be sure they have not been eating or drinking for at least 30 minutes. Each student will provide a saliva sample. It takes most students less than two minutes to provide the saliva. Students will miss less class time than a typical bathroom break.

Is the testing available to students who are not returning in person?

Tests are not available to families who are participating in remote learning. If a student would like to switch from remote to in-person learning, they should contact their school's principal. Students will need to complete a test and provide a consent form prior to moving to in-person learning.

Can SafeGuard test the rest of our family?

Unfortunately, due to costs and the logistics of processing tests, the district cannot extend SafeGuard testing to people who are not students or staff. Testing is available through the DuPage County Health Department, and many doctor's offices.

Who did the district consult with before bringing in these tests?

The district spoke with multiple districts about their testing plans and talked to multiple vendors. The district heard formal presentations from four companies that offered different types of COVID-19 testing.

The tests were evaluated for reliability, cost, availability, logistics, turnaround time, equity, and certifications. You can see the board presentation here: <https://bit.ly/3gVmrn0>

The district also consulted on all options with Dr. Jessica McIntyre, a CCSD 89 parent who is an associate professor in family medicine at Loyola University and helped the university develop protocols for in-person learning; Dr. Giselle Sandi-Tapia, Deputy Division Director at Argonne National Laboratory and an adjunct associate professor in the Department of Microbial Pathogens and Immunity at Rush University; and Dr. Mark Dworkin, the associate director of epidemiology at University of Illinois-Chicago School of Public Health.

How do I sign up for screening?

Students need to participate in the January 4 or January 5 screening and turn in a consent form (<http://www.ccsd89.org/CovidConsent>). Additional forms will be available at the school if you are not able to print one. Families only need to fill out the consent form for each student once.

Families must turn in a consent form for each CCSD 89 student who is participating in surveillance screening. On January 4 or January 5, each CCSD 89 student must be screened at their own school.

If you are not able to attend the screening on January 4 or January 5, but plan to be an in-person learner, please contact your school nurse.

What number of potentially positive COVID-19 tests would close the district?

The district will be consulting with medical experts for any signs of transmission within the schools. Schools or even specific classrooms could move to remote learning if there are signs of an outbreak in one area.

What is the cost to families for testing?

The SafeGuard test costs the district \$11 per test. There is no charge to families.

The district is not able to provide diagnostic testing to all students; diagnostic testing costs at least five times as much as surveillance tests.

Why aren't elementary students being tested after the first two weeks?

After January 12, only middle-school students, staff, and students who eat lunch at school would be tested every week. Elementary students would not be tested weekly after January 12 because they do not eat in the building and are in static groups that don't mix during the day.

Will my students have to take the test if they've already had COVID-19?

Yes, all students will participate in the screening. Excluding students who have previously had COVID-19 could potentially share medical information in front of classmates. Additionally, it is not yet clear whether people who have previously had COVID-19 can transmit the virus.