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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Testing Initiatives to Support K-12 Schools

Mobile Testing Units and Stop the Spread Initiative Will Expand Testing Opportunities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

8/20/2020

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Executive Office of Education

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced two rapid response testing initiatives for schools to address potential clusters of COVID-19 cases among students, teachers or staff at a school building.

School officials, after consultation with public health authorities, will be able to request a state-sponsored mobile testing unit come to their school to test a group of students and/or staff if a potential cluster of COVID-19 has been identified and transmission appears to have occurred within the school. This resource is available to both public and private schools.

Before making a request, school administrators should consult with public health authorities first to determine if a request for mobile testing should be made.

The mobile rapid response unit will provide free testing of asymptomatic students or staff, who are not known to be a close contact of someone who tested positive, when there is evidence that COVID-19 transmission may have occurred within a classroom or school within the past 14 days. After consulting with an epidemiologist from the Department of Public Health, a school administrator or the local board of health can request a mobile rapid response unit be deployed by the COVID-19 Command Response Center.

Anyone under the age of 18 must have written permission from their parent or legal guardian to receive testing.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Public Health will release detailed guidance in the coming weeks on how and when testing can be requested, as well as testing and

result protocols.

The mobile response team may be deployed if the following minimal conditions apply:

- Two or more students/staff within the classroom group develop COVID-19 within 14 days, and transmission/exposure occurred in the classroom;
- More than 3 percent of the cohort/grade (at least 3 individuals) develop COVID-19 within 14 days, and transmission/exposure occurred in the school;
- More than 3 percent of the school develops COVID-19 within 14 days, and there is evidence of transmission within the school;
- Three or more staff within the same school develop COVID-19 within 14 days, and there is evidence of transmission among the staff; or
- Two or more students on the bus develop COVID-19 within 14 days.

In addition to the mobile testing unit, the Administration will extend the Stop the Spread initiative through September 30 in certain communities with higher rates of COVID-19 to help cities and towns as students begin to return to school.

The Stop the Spread initiative was launched on July 10. It is a data-driven initiative and currently provides free testing in 20 communities that have high rates of COVID-19.

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Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito and the Baker-Polito Administration are committed to serving the people of Massachusetts and making the Commonwealth a great place to live, work and raise a family.

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Executive Office of Education (/orgs/executive-office-of-education)

From pre-school to post-secondary education, the Executive Office of Education works to connect all Massachusetts residents with an education that creates opportunities.

While Massachusetts' students rank first in the nation on many educational measures, the Executive Office of Education strives to strengthen the foundations of education reform, empower schools and educators, and develop pathways to college and careers so all students in the Commonwealth can succeed, regardless of their zip code.

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ESE oversees the education of children grades pre-k through 12 in Massachusetts, striving to ensure that all students across the Commonwealth succeed.

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