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State Officials Announce New COVID-19 Testing Resources for Schools

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For Immediate Release

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New resources provide additional support for schools implementing COVID-19 testing for staff and students

SACRAMENTO – State officials today announced the release of new online resources to support COVID-19 testing and the safe reopening of schools. Today's announcement builds on the Safe Schools for All Plan and follows the launch of the Safe Schools For All Hub.

"As conditions improve, the first priority for communities must be to reopen schools through careful planning and implementation of safety precautions," said Governor Newsom. "Frequent testing of staff and students can be a core precaution to both ensure safety and to build trust and confidence among staff and the families of students."

COVID-19 testing has been an important safety precaution in workplaces throughout California and around the world. The state has tailored supports specific to schools in order to minimize costs and hurdles, and to spur implementation. New and existing supports can be found online and include access to the State Valencia Branch Lab, resources to help guide decision-making

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and implementation and resources to minimize costs.

State Valencia Branch Lab

On October 30, 2020, Governor Newsom announced the opening of the California Department of Public Health Valencia Branch Laboratory (VBL), an innovative new laboratory in California that is designed to increase the state's COVID-19 testing capacity and reduce test turnaround time.

All schools in California may access the capacity and testing services of the VBL, including PCR tests at approximately one-third the market rate and 48-hour processing times. To date, schools in 31 counties have been implementing school-centered testing with assistance from the state VBL. Starting today, the VBL will also support testing of students, as well as staff.

Schools interested in receiving support can register for a weekly onboarding webinar. The state is also launching outreach to encourage new school districts to partner with the state's lab and support existing school partners—direct assistance model—to ensure their testing

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needs are met.

Resources for Decision-Making and Implementation

Schools deciding between different testing models can also leverage state resources to understand and evaluate their options. Online resources include:

- Considerations to help inform decision-making, including the pros and cons of different testing modalities (e.g., PCR, antigen, etc.)
- Information on labs that can process PCR tests, including both the state VBL and a list of commercial labs
- Guidelines regarding antigen testing options

State resources can also help schools minimize costs and identify financing solutions. Online resources include:

- A testing plan calculator to assist schools to estimate the costs of different testing strategies and cadences
- A fact sheet on financing options for COVID-19 testing of staff and

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students
- State and federal funds that are available to support COVID-19 testing

Together, the new resources will help simplify the planning and implementation of COVID-19 testing. As conditions improve, the State Safe Schools Team will continue developing resources that spur and support schools to plan and implement safe school reopenings, beginning with our youngest and most disproportionately impacted students. For more information, please visit the Safe Schools For All Hub: https://schools.covid19.ca.gov/.

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