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# Governor Reeves Launches Expanded COVID-19 Testing for Teachers and Telehealth in Schools

**JACKSON** — Today, Governor Tate Reeves launched new COVID-19 initiatives to ensure the health and well-being of students and teachers as they return to school.

Understanding the concern of many as schools reopen across our state, Governor Reeves is expanding COVID-19 testing for all Mississippi teachers, even for those without symptoms, and emergency telehealth coverage through the Mississippi Division of Medicaid (DOM) to include schools.

"Today, as we work to ensure that children can achieve some quality learning in the state of Mississippi, we are announcing two measures to increase access to health care and COVID-19 prevention in schools. First, we are expanding school-based emergency telehealth coverage throughout the state of Mississippi," said Governor Tate Reeves at today's press briefing. "This will allow schools, even those without school nurses or school-based clinics, to access telehealth services. We also know that testing can allow us to prevent the spread of the virus by immediately identifying and isolating known cases. As teachers return to the classroom, we want to make it simple for them to get access to testing."

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Working closely with the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) to protect our hardworking teachers, the Governor is providing more flexibility for teachers to get tested. This expanded testing for teachers will enable them to get tested at any point, even if they have not exhibited symptoms of COVID-19 or come in close contact with a known case.

Teachers will have three options for testing across Mississippi: at MSDH's Jackson site at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, community sites across the state, as well as by rotating testing teams at their home county health department. Testing teams will rotate every two weeks at county health departments, where teachers can drive up and get tested.

As school districts and their communities tailored their plans to reopen schools safely, Governor Reeves worked with Executive Director Drew Snyder to help boost efforts to protect students, enabling schools without school nurses or school-based clinics to access telehealth services.

“Extending telehealth coverage has been a key part of ensuring access to care during this public health emergency,” said Executive Director Drew Snyder. “As children return to the classroom, increasing access in school settings is more important now than ever.”

Under this expansion of school-based emergency telehealth coverage, schools are approved as temporary telehealth originating site providers on the condition that services are facilitated by a telepresenter acting within their scope of practice and license and/or certification.

Telehealth services are traditionally delivered by an enrolled Mississippi Medicaid provider located at a distant site to a beneficiary located at an originating site, such as a clinic. DOM’s telehealth policy already allowed school-based clinics – staffed by a physician, nurse practitioner, or a physician assistant providing well and sick care – to serve as an originating site for a beneficiary in need of services beyond the clinic’s abilities.

The amended Emergency Telehealth Policy allows any school to serve as the originating site as long as the distant site provider uses a telepresenter who meets the definition of Miss. Admin. Code Part 225, Rule 1.1.D. Telepresenters can include registered nurses employed by a school/school district or staff employed by a Rural Health Clinic, a Federally Qualified Health Clinic, or private provider.

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