

STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR THE PRIORITIZATION OF THE USE OF RAPID COVID-19 TESTS - *January 31, 2022*



Background

Due to nationwide challenges in the supply chain combined with a surge in demand for testing due to the Omicron surge of cases, there is a strain on the **COVID-19 testing** system in the Commonwealth. Testing remains an important tool to inform the care of individuals and to prevent transmission to others.

The vast majority of testing is conducted by private sector health care partners including physician offices, urgent care, and pharmacies. Public health conducts approximately **3-5%** of all **COVID-19 testing**, through a combination of Community Testing Events and Community Testing Centers. **VDH** also supports testing access through the provision of rapid antigen test supplies to community partners. There were **74,155** testing encounters on **January 12, 2022**; this was the highest number of testing encounters in a single day during the entirety of the pandemic. Testing demand has been decreasing in recent days.

In support of Governor Youngkin's COVID-19 Action Plan, **VDH** will prioritize the rapid antigen test supplies that **VDH** purchases through federal grants based on the respective approved work plans and budgets. **VDH** purchases tests to support access to testing for specific populations, including:

- K12 Schools
- Long Term Care Facilities
- Confinement Facilities
- Shelters or Organizations that serve people experiencing homelessness
- Safety-net health care providers such as Federally Qualified Health Centers and Free Clinics, and Local Health Departments

VDH has taken the following steps to ensure access to COVID-19 testing:

K-12 Schools:



Test to Stay program for K12 Schools: **Test to Stay** is a practice that consists of contact tracing and serial COVID-19 testing to allow school-associated close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to continue to attend school during their recommended quarantine period. **VDH** has provided rapid antigen test kits to more than 30 public school divisions for purposes of implementing a Test to Stay program. Additional schools will be onboarded over coming weeks.



ViSSTA: **VDH** continues to support screening and diagnostic testing programs at K12 Schools. Ninety-six (96) public school divisions and 35 private or independent schools have enrolled in the **ViSSTA** Screening Testing Program. Provided additional rapid antigen test kits to 143 public school divisions and private schools to support diagnostic testing needs. These rapid test supplies can be used to students, teachers or staff with symptoms, or persons who have had a known exposure.. All **VDH** supplies of proctored antigen test kits have been reallocated and reserved for K12 settings.



Distribution of rapid Antigen Test Kits to Community Partners that serve the Governor's stated priority populations:

- VDH will continue to provide rapid antigen test kits to partners that serve individuals who are more vulnerable or who may have serious health conditions. Partners include but are not limited to: local health departments, confinement settings, long term care facilities, Federally Qualified Health Centers, free clinics, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Councils for distribution to local EMS providers.
- VDH will continue to supplement test supplies to long term care facilities as resources allow. CMS certified skilled nursing facilities continue to receive direct shipments of testing supplies from the US Department of Health and Human Services.
- VDH has directed its local health departments to prioritize future rapid test kit distributions to the populations outlined in the Governor's plan.
- VDH has distributed **152,450** antigen test kits through the **STACC** library test distribution program. VDH will temporarily pause its **STACC** program to ensure that available rapid test kits in VDH inventory are diverted to the prioritized populations in the populations outlined in the Governor's COVID-19 Action Plan.



Guidance to Healthcare Providers:

During a time of increased demand for **COVID-19 testing** combined with strains on the health care system, in general, testing should be prioritized for people who have symptoms and/or who have had a known exposure. Further, VDH recommends that health care providers prioritize available rapid tests for the following populations to the extent possible.

- a. People who work as health care providers or people who are other essential workers who need to be tested to return to work. Employers are discouraged from requiring a negative test to be "released" from isolation following a COVID-19 infection.
- b. People living in skilled nursing facilities or other long-term care facilities and/or people over the age of 65
- c. People with **certain medical conditions** that may place them at increased risk for serious illness or hospitalization from COVID-19 and their caregivers
- d. Those who need to be tested after consultation with a healthcare provider

As test supplies increase, providers are advised to expand access as appropriate.