

[The Health Department and the Agency of Education released new guidance related to Covid 19](#) on August 10, 2022 in the form of a memo. The memo highlighted the incredible efforts of our school nurses through the pandemic to keep our communities safe and to support our students, families, faculty, and staff. The memo begins to shift our thinking from a pandemic to endemic state, treating COVID-19 similarly to the flu. It also highlights our need to shift our illness response protocols and testing practices, to align with Vermont Agency of Education guidance. All of our schools will be open for in person teaching and learning following the new VTAOE and VDH guidelines. Students, Faculty, and staff continue to have the option to wear or not wear masks in accordance with their beliefs. The GISU continues to be proud of the support everyone has had for one another and look forward to another year where everyone is respectful of each other's personal decisions.

#### **GISU Covid Protocols and Plans effective Date: August 26, 2022**

##### **COVID-19 Sickness Plans and Procedures for Fall 2022**

- If a student or staff member is presenting with *mild* symptoms, the decision to test or return to class will be made by the school nurse/health assistant based upon their clinical decision-making. *Mild* respiratory disease symptoms include runny nose or nasal congestion, minimal cough, and absence of fever in an individual with no current or recent household exposure to Covid-19.
- If a student or staff member is not well enough to learn or participate, regardless of whether they are tested for COVID-19, they will be sent home from school. A student who is being sent home due to illness may be required to wear a mask while awaiting pick-up. The decision to require masking will be made by the school nurse/health assistant based on clinical decision-making. They may return to school if their symptoms have improved, and they meet school criteria for their illness. COVID-19 testing is not required for symptomatic students or staff to return to school.
- If a student or staff member has confirmed COVID-19, they will follow the Vermont Department of Health [isolation guidance](#).
- GISU Schools should continue to utilize isolation spaces if a student needs to isolate due to illness.
- School nurses/health assistants will follow best practices for [infection control](#). CDC Standard Precautions are the minimum infection prevention practices that apply to all settings providing direct care, regardless of suspected or confirmed infection status of the person. This includes the school health office where healthcare is delivered. These practices are designed to minimize the spread of infection among school health personnel, students, and staff.
- The GISU recommends that students and staff keep up to date on all vaccinations.
- The GISU encourages good respiratory hygiene practice. The CDC has published [this resource](#) which can be used to promote respiratory hygiene. Staff and students are permitted to exercise their own or their family's decision-making to wear a mask in school settings.

## **GISU COVID-19 Testing Plans for Fall 2022**

- Antigen and LAMP tests will be used exclusively for symptomatic students and staff; school nurses/health assistants will use their clinical judgment in determining when to use tests in schools. COVID-19 testing is not required for symptomatic students or staff to stay at or return to school. Schools will require verbal (or emailed) consent from parents/caregivers to do in-school testing. Consent can also be given [on-line](#).
- Tests can be administered in school or be sent home for symptomatic students and staff for GISU health assistants/nurse to manage and use at their discretion, again based on clinical decision making.
- If an antigen test is negative, and the student or staff member is presenting with mild symptoms that may be attributable to another diagnosis, the student or staff member may return to class. This decision should be made by the school nurse/health assistant based on clinical decision-making. A second test will be sent home with the student or staff member so it can be repeated before the start of school the next day. Testing is not required to attend school.
- A LAMP test can be used on a student or staff member if two or more antigen tests are negative, and the individual remains symptomatic.
- Antigen tests may be sent home to families of symptomatic students and staff; school nurses should use their clinical judgment in determining when to dispense tests home.
- Fewer LAMP tests will be distributed to schools, so these tests will be reserved for in-school student or staff member use only.
- Any changes to our COVID response will be communicated on the District website as well as through school newsletters. If you have any questions please contact your student's school nurse.