**Introducing The Pooled Testing Program to School Staff**

#### **Template Email to Staff**

**Subject Line:** Getting back to in-person learning: Sign up for (School Name)’s new COVID-19 Testing Program

Dear (Staff/ Teachers etc):

At (Name of School), we miss seeing our students and staff in person. We want to bring everyone back to school **safely.**

We are starting a voluntary **free weekly COVID-19 testing program** to help keep our staff, students and community safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Regular COVID-19 testing of students and staff will help us lower the risk of the disease in our school by finding and isolating individuals who have COVID-19 quickly, even before or if they never show symptoms. We have confidence in our safety protocols including masking, distancing, ventilation improvements, and sanitization. The weekly COVID-19 testing program is just another way we are striving to keep our school environment safe for everyone.

**We hope that you will participate by signing a consent form**. The more individuals who participate, the safer our school will be!

**What is the COVID-19 testing program?**

* Participating individuals will be tested for COVID-19 once a week by our staff/ nurses
* The program starts on DATE
* The test is performed at school at (LOCATION)
* **We are developing a smooth scheduling system so that testing does not interrupt teaching and learning**
* The COVID-19 test is quick, easy and it does not hurt. It is a nasal test you can administer yourself that gently swabs the lower inner nostril.
* The test is free. You do not need to pay for the test or have insurance to get the test.
* The program is optional, but we hope you will participate to help us keep our schools as safe as possible.

**How can I participate in the program?**

To participate in the testing program, you need to **sign a consent form**. You only need to sign once to consent for testing each week.

*For districts using low-PII software:* This form gives consent to share your information if needed. **No personal health information is provided to anyone outside of the district in the first round of pooled testing.** Our school nurses will call any individuals in a positive pool to explain next steps and discuss follow-up testing options. Test results will only be shared with the Department of Public Health if you test positive on an individual follow-up test.

*For districts using high-PII software:* This form gives us permission to share your information with the technology platform we use to track testing. Your information will only be shared with the Department of Public Health and other departments if you test positive on an individual test.

**There are 2 ways to sign up:**

* Sign up electronically - check your email/ text for a link
* Sign up by printing / signing the attached form and [mail it in / send in]. Or you can request to have a paper form mailed to you [customize based on your school’s process]

The program is voluntary. You are not required to participate in the program. If you do not consent to participate, you can still come to school. However, we strongly encourage you to participate to help us reduce the spread of COVID-19.

**How does it work?**

The type of testing we are using is called “Pooled Testing.” Pooled testing makes it easier and faster to find individuals who might have COVID-19.

**Pooled testing also helps ensure a smooth system that does not interrupt teaching and learning; we can test entire classes/cohorts at once in a short period of time to minimize interruptions to classroom time.**  More details will be provided on our website at URL or future staff communications.

Here is how it works:

* Participating individuals are tested individually once a week with a nasal swab test.
* Then, ten swabs will be mixed together into a group of swabs called a “pool.” The pool is sent to a lab where the whole pool is tested for COVID-19 at one time.
* If the pool test comes back negative, all students in the pool are COVID-negative. In this case, you will not hear from us.
* If the pool test comes back positive, it means that at least one person in the pool is COVID-positive. In this case, all members of that pool will come back to (name of location) the next morning for an individual follow-up test [optional: insert guidance on what your school will do between positive pool & individual result].

**[CHOOSE THE BULLET BELOW THAT MATCHES YOUR FOLLOW-UP TESTING PLANS]**

* [If using *only* BinaxNOW] Individual follow-up tests produce results in 15 mins. If the individual follow-up test comes back negative, the person may return to school as normal. If the individual follow-up test comes back positive, we will work with the person to quarantine and get connected to care. We/the [insert] Board of Health will also reach out to start the contact tracing process.
* [If using BinaxNOW & indiv PCRs] Members of a positive pool will receive two follow-up tests - one with fast results that come back in 15 minutes and one confirmatory test that takes 24 hours to return results. If either test comes back positive, we will work with the person to quarantine and get connected to care.
* [If using *only* indiv PCRs] Individual follow-up tests will be sent to the lab. We will receive results within 24 hours. While waiting for results, [insert school protocol here]. If the individual follow-up test comes back positive, we will work with the person to quarantine and get connected to care. If the individual follow-up test comes back negative, the person returns to school as normal.

Learn more about our Testing Program: (link to relevant website). We will send more information before the Program begins.

Have Questions? Contact (CONTACT NAME) at (EMAIL & PHONE). Thank you and we hope to see you soon!

Sincerely,

NAME OF CONTACT