

ELC School Reopening COVID-19 Screening Testing Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Why should we participate in the ELC School Reopening COVID-19 Screening/Testing Program if we already offer free testing?**

This program is designed to continually test staff students and staff to more quickly identify a potential case of COVID-19. This program is at no cost to schools and provides all of the resources necessary to run a successful screening testing program. Funding can be used to pay for staff or contract with local partners to help conduct screening testing.

2. **How can COVID-19 screening/testing be used to support participation in extracurricular activities?**

To facilitate safe participation in sports, extracurricular activities, and other activities with elevated risk (such as activities that involve singing, shouting, band, and exercise that could lead to increased exhalation), CDC recommends schools implement screening testing for participants who are not fully vaccinated. In areas with low transmission, schools should routinely test student athletes, extracurricular participants, coaches, and trainers, and other people (such as adult volunteers) who are not fully vaccinated and could come into close contact with others during these activities.

Schools may consider implement screening testing of participants who are not fully vaccinated up to 24 hours before sporting, competition, or extracurricular events (e.g., competitions). Schools may consider using different screening testing strategies for lower-risk sports.

3. **Is my school or district required to participate in the ELC School Reopening COVID-19 Screening/Testing Program if we wish to continue offering symptomatic testing of staff and students?**

School districts and individual schools already receiving Binax Now testing kits and supplies for the purpose of symptomatic testing are not required to participate in this program in order to continue receiving testing kits and supplies. Schools participating in the screening/testing program must implement asymptomatic screening testing as the primary part of their overall testing strategy. Symptomatic testing is also allowed, but only as a secondary focus to identify potential COVID-19 cases and stop the spread early.

4. **What are the allowable expenses under the ELC School Reopening COVID-19 Screening/Testing Grant?**

Allowable Expenses

1. Personnel (term, temporary, students, overtime, contract staff, etc.).
2. Collection supplies, test kits, reagents, consumables, and other necessary supplies for existing testing (screening or diagnostic).
3. Personal Protective Equipment - Please see the most current CDC guidance for details ([Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools](#)).
4. Hygiene and cleaning supplies.
5. Tools, including hardware and software, that assist in the rapid identification, electronic reporting, monitoring, analysis, and evaluation of control measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 that may be translatable to other diseases (e.g., GIS software, visualization dashboards, cloud services).

6. Contracts with academic institutions, private laboratories, other non-commercial healthcare entities, and/or commercial entities that may provide all or part of the screening testing needs. This may include contracts with companies that offer comprehensive support for screening testing in K-12 (e.g., sample collection, screening testing, and reporting).
7. Program incentives may be considered to encourage individuals to participate in screening testing.
8. Expenses associated with technical assistance to establish school-based screening testing programs (NGOs, academic institutions, foundations, etc.).

The above list covers the anticipated, most relevant costs associated with achieving the activities in the ELC Reopening Schools Grant. This list does not represent a full list of allowable costs. For a full list of allowable expenses, refer to the [ELC Reopening Schools Updated Guidance](#).

5. Can ELC School Reopening funds be used to follow-up on positive COVID-19 cases?

ELC School Reopening funds can be used to support costs associated with initiating appropriate follow-up on positive tests (e.g., confirming case status, identification of contacts, collaboration with public health on case investigations)+- and conducting mitigation efforts to prevent spread within the school population.

6. Can incentives be given to school individuals under ELC School Reopening funding?

Program incentives may be considered to encourage individuals to participate in screening testing. Recipients interested in exploring this option must submit a plan that covers all of the following elements: (a) justification, (b) cost savings [e.g., how it will defray costs or have a positive return on investment], (c) defined amount (not to exceed \$25 per instance), (d) qualifications for issuance, and (e) method of tracking.

7. Can ELC School Reopening funds be used to test during outbreaks or for symptomatic individuals?

Previously awarded resources have been provided to bolster diagnostic testing and response for COVID-19. The additional funds provided under ELC Reopening Schools are intended to be directed toward screening/testing, but CDC and Montana DPHHS understand that there may be some individuals tested using these funds who are symptomatic.

8. Can ELC School Reopening funds be used to cover associated COVID-19 costs that were incurred prior to the award?

No, the ELC Reopening Schools award cannot be used for retroactive reimbursement for any expenses prior to August 1, 2021.

9. How can school districts determine what level of COVID-19 transmission is occurring in their community?

Schools can review data from the [CDC](#) or [MT DPHHS](#) to find recent information on the number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the previous week. CDC defines community transmission as low, moderate, substantial, or high as referenced on their [COVID-19 Data Tracking Page](#). Schools should contact their local health departments for more information and guidance to assess local public health conditions.

10. How will schools receive their COVID-19 testing supplies?

Schools will receive additional onboarding instructions, including how to register and order supplies, after their application has been approved. Schools that that would like to onboard with the DPHHS

COVID-19 rapid testing program, but are not going to submit an application for the School Reopening grant can contact the Montana Communicable Disease Program at (406) 444-0273 or schoolhealth@mt.gov. Schools can also reach out to their [local health department](#) to inquire about additional test supply options at their school.

11. Who can conduct BinaxNow COVID-19 testing?

The BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Card Tests do not require a medical professional to collect or conduct the tests. While a school district or school-based nurse is preferable, any staff member can be easily trained to conduct the tests.

The test is well tolerated by all age groups and uses a non-invasive collection procedure by inserting a swab a short way in the anterior nose.

Training and informational links:

- Abbott BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Card Test Training and Training Videos
<https://www.globalpointofcare.abbott/en/support/product-installation-training/navicabrand/navica-binaxnow-ag-training.html>
- Abbott BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Card Test Product Insert
<https://ensur.invmed.com/ensur/contentAction.aspx?key=ensur.523747.S2R4E4A3.20200905.10292.4363018>

12. How often should we offer COVID-19 screening/testing in our school district or private school?

The CDC recommends taking into consideration the level of community transmission and implementation of mitigation strategies when deciding on frequency of school-based testing. Schools/districts can use [CDC's Indicators for Dynamic School Decision-Making](#) to determine which schools may provide the best settings for school-based testing based on infection risk. When using screening testing as a strategy to identify cases and prevent secondary spread, CDC recommends:

- At least weekly testing of teachers and staff who are not fully vaccinated in all levels of community transmission. More frequent testing can increase effectiveness of a screening testing program.
- Weekly testing of students who are not fully vaccinated in areas with moderate, substantial, and high community transmission.

See the CDC's Screening Testing Recommendations for K-12 Schools by Level of Community Transmission: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

With COVID-19 vaccine widely available, schools may consider screening testing for certain populations, such as in elementary schools where students are not currently eligible for vaccination. It may also help facilitate safe participation in sports and other activities with elevated risk, (such as activities that involve singing, shouting, band, and exercise that could lead to increased exhalation). Schools can implement testing among student athletes/participants, coaches and trainers, and any other individuals (such as parent volunteers) who could come into close contact with others during these activities. CDC recommends testing participants who are not fully vaccinated at least once per week for high-risk sports and activities in low and moderate levels of community transmission and twice per week in areas with substantial transmission.

Additional recommendations include:

- Testing low-and intermediate-risk sports participants who are not fully vaccinated at least once weekly in areas of moderate, substantial, and high transmission.

- Universal screening testing the day of or day before sporting events, competitions, and activities.

13. Which schools are eligible for the ELC School Reopening Screening/Testing Program?

A district or school, including local education agencies (districts, charter or private schools, approved special education schools and education collaborative), providing any type of in-person instruction is invited to participate in this initiative. There is no minimum number of participants required at a school site, though screening testing must be conducted at some point during the performance period or DPHHS will request that funding be returned.

14. Does the entire district or school need to participate in the ELC School Reopening Program to be eligible?

Schools and districts are strongly encouraged to involve all students and staff in screening testing, excluding any individuals who may opt out. However, districts or schools may choose to launch this program with a smaller subset of schools or grades, and students or staff, and scale up to a school-wide or district-wide model, as desired.

15. Can school districts work with other districts to pool resources?

School districts are allowed to work with other school districts in the same school system or school districts in neighboring communities to pool resources for greater efficiency. An example of this could be multiple school districts utilizing ELC grant funding to establish a central screening testing location for staff and/or students from the various participating schools.

16. Can multiple school districts within the same school system apply for separate grants?

Yes. Multiple school districts within the same larger school system may apply for individual grants. The districts may choose to implement separate screening/testing programs or pool resources to support screening/testing throughout the school system.

Examples include:

Missoula High School- 0584
Missoula Elementary- 0583

or

Shelby High School- 0910
Shelby Elementary- 0911

17. What happens if our school/district receives funding, but nobody participates in the screening testing program?

If your school or district is awarded ELC funding, but nobody participates in the screening testing program, you will be asked to return a portion of the funding. The total amount of funding to be returned will be based on staffing dedicated to the testing program throughout the duration of the performance period as well as the utilization of funds according to the original proposed budget and subsequent budget expenditure reports.