



MEMORANDUM

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, and After School and Out of School Time Program Leaders

From: Margret Cooke, Acting Commissioner, Department of Public Health
Samantha Aigner-Treworgy, Commissioner, Department of Early Education and Care
Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Date: November 12, 2021

Subject: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Statewide Test & Stay Program and Coordination Between School Districts and Out of School Time Programs

School districts and after school and out of school time programs (herein “OST programs”) are critical partners in providing whole day educational programming for children in elementary and younger middle school grades. As it is a priority to keep as many healthy children attending after school programs as possible, we are offering this extension of the Test and Stay Program to enable school districts to coordinate with Out of School Time programs licensed and/or funded (herein “EEC-affiliated”) by the Department of Early Education and Care that serve the same students.

The policy below describes how districts and programs can share information related to COVID-19 test results for students with parental consent and enable students who are Test and Stay participants and continue to test negative to attend school and their OST program. This policy is effective November 15, 2021.

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will provide additional information and support to school districts and EEC-affiliated OST programs to support implementation of the extended Test and Stay policy and to support increased collaboration and coordination between schools and OST programs to benefit children and families across the Commonwealth. Additional resources can be found [here](#).

Background:

The [Commonwealth of Massachusetts’s Test & Stay Program](#) empowers local school districts to support students’ continued physical presence in school buildings by minimizing the disruption resulting from possible exposure to a positive COVID-19 case. For eligible asymptomatic students who meet the CDC definition as “close contacts”, the participating school provides daily COVID-19 testing to allow continuous services and instruction at school while maintaining the safety of the school community. For many students in the Commonwealth, the school day also includes before-school and after-school care offered by an EEC-affiliated OST program. The Commonwealth has adopted this policy to extend the benefits of the Test & Stay Program to EEC-affiliated OST programs that are operated within or

otherwise serve school students and to improve coordination between participating schools and EEC-affiliated OST programs.

Policy Adjustment:

Effective November 15, 2021, EEC-affiliated OST programs that meet the following program design criteria and districts and schools participating in the statewide Test and Stay Program (hereafter “participating schools”) can share the following:

- COVID-19 test results about the students they mutually serve
- Close contacts at the school who also participate in EEC-affiliated OST programs
- Close contacts at EEC-affiliated OST programs who may participate in the Test and Stay Program at school

EEC-affiliated OST programs are required to adhere to strong, federal health and safety requirements ([CCDF Regulations](#)) and are subject to EEC monitoring of those standards to ensure compliance to those requirements. Recognizing the structured care environment of those EEC-affiliated OST programs, the Commonwealth urges schools and districts to partner with their EEC-affiliated OST programs to share information bidirectionally related to the health and well-being of the students jointly served.

Program Design Criteria for Information & Record Sharing Between OST Programs and Participating Schools:

- Children served in the OST program attend a school that participates in Commonwealth’s Test & Stay Program.
- The participating child’s parent or legal guardian consents to Test & Stay testing and the disclosure of those test results to the OST program.
- OST program and district identify shared points of contact for student engagement and wellness.
- OST program is EEC funded or licensed. As required by regulations, these programs maintain daily attendance records of children to support contact tracing by the local board of health and/or Department of Public Health, as required. Districts can access a directory of EEC-licensed programs on EEC’s Consumer Website [here](#).
- OST program and district have a partnership/relationship with the local board of health to support case investigation/contact tracing (CI/CT). OST programs may also leverage their relationships with the local board of health to creatively solve for operational hurdles they may experience when partnering with the local school district.
- The OST program will make every effort to cohort children based on grade-level to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 after possible exposures.

Rationale:

Information between EEC-affiliated OST programs and participating schools that serve the same students will help mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 and support families who depend on comprehensive wrap-around services, such as before and after school care, for children attending PK-12 schools.

Implementation & Operational Support:

Both onsite and offsite EEC-affiliated OST programs are eligible to access information if there is a signed Consent Form on file for all participating children by their parent or legal guardian authorizing information sharing related to test results and close contacts. EEC-affiliated OST programs or districts can use this Consent Form to authorize the disclosures described above. Once signed and accepted by the

participating school, the Consent Form should be provided to designated points of contact for matters related to student engagement and wellness.

EEC-affiliated OST programs will *not* be expected to administer COVID-19 testing under the Test & Stay Program. Participating schools will continue to administer the COVID-19 Test & Stay Program but will broaden their scope to include students identified as close contacts during their OST care hours. Contact tracing and case investigation processes will remain the same. Participating schools, EEC-affiliated OST programs and the local board of health (or Department of Public Health, as applicable) will collaborate to identify students who may meet the CDC’s definition of a “close contact.”

The Test & Stay Program is administered by participating schools and typically takes place at the start of the school day. Individuals identified as close contacts should remain masked at all times in school and on the bus, and they should observe these rules at school and while attending EEC-affiliated OST programs. Children who meet the CDC definition of a close contact and participate in the Test & Stay Program do not need to be excluded from before care services or bus transportation in advance of receiving their daily COVID-19 test.

Children who test positive in the Test & Stay Program are not permitted to attend school or EEC-affiliated OST programming until they [complete their isolation period](#). It is the responsibility of the participating school to notify the parent/legal guardian and EEC-affiliated OST program of a positive test result.

Disputes about information sharing or questions about this policy should be directed to k12covid19testing@mass.gov. OST programs can escalate concerns to their Regional Licensing Director at EEC.

DESE and EEC will jointly support participating schools and programs in their implementation of this expanded policy.