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D90's COVID-19 Antigen Testing Initiative Expanded

Household Members of District 90 Students, Faculty, and Staff Now Eligible for Antigen Testing

River Forest, IL -- On February 16, the District 90 COVID-19 antigen testing initiative will be expanded to include symptomatic household members of the District's students, faculty, and staff.

Since January, District 90 has provided testing for COVID-19 to symptomatic students, staff, or those who have been exposed as close contacts to diagnosed COVID-19 patients. The Abbott BinaxNOW rapid-response antigen tests have been conducted on-site in a secure location at Roosevelt Middle School. Symptomatic individuals have had the tests administered during scheduled appointments three times per week (as need dictates).

Administered by licensed and BinaxNOW-trained medical professionals, the test can be read in approximately 15 – 30 minutes. In District 90, the individuals who are qualified to conduct the tests and interpret results are School Nurses, the Infection Control Officer, and independent contractors with confirmed medical certification. Symptomatic individuals with either a positive or negative result will be counseled to see their physician for follow-up directions and/or quarantine. Test results for all individuals will be reported to the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and are subject to contact tracing.

The test center will be open for symptomatic students, staff, or D90 immediate household members who have been approved for testing by a D90 School Nurse, Infection Control Officer, or Administrator. Students must have a signed "authorization/consent for testing" from a parent or guardian and a signed authorization that allows for sharing of student medical information between the family (child), physician, and District 90. Adults are required to sign consent for testing.

Several protocols have been instituted to abate the spread of the coronavirus and prevent potentially infected individuals from entering the school building. The test center uses a drive-up model. Walk-up testing can also be made available when necessary. In both cases, testing occurs curbside to avoid potentially infected individuals from entering the school facility. Tested individuals will be requested to leave the immediate area upon obtaining the test to lessen the number of participants in the vicinity. Medical professionals will contact the test participants with the results. Heightened cleaning and disinfecting protocols will also be conducted after all testing sessions. Further, accommodations have been made for the lawful disposal of medical waste generated during the testing procedure with the District's infectious waste disposal contractor.

Since antigen tests do not have the same level of accuracy as PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests, it is possible that an individual can be infected with the COVID-19 virus but have a negative antigen test result. For this reason, both positive and negative results will prompt referral to the individual's physician. In the case of a positive result, the physician would be best suited to direct a treatment plan and possible additional COVID-19 testing. In the case of a negative result, the individual's physician would be able to provide advice about potential treatment for the contributing symptoms. The tests have been sourced at no cost to the District or participants from the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) through the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). The District is enthusiastic about the role it will play in assisting students, families, and staff members in mitigating the risk of COVID-19 transmission within the D90 community, and by extension, the entire community.

The District is grateful to many individuals in our school community for their role in the development of this testing initiative and the role they will play in implementing the service. These include District 90 nurses Gina Hardy, Erin Godellas, Pam Clink, Alex Habenicht, and Infection Control Officer Melissa Tatum. Special thanks are also extended to community volunteers Dr. Steven Powell and Barb DeHaan (RN, MS) for their practical and medical expertise in coordinating details and establishing protocols.

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