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## COVID-19 Testing Supplies for Ohio's K-12 Schools, Colleges, and Universities

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) is announcing plans to prioritize the state's supply of COVID-19 tests to first support testing for K-12 schools and colleges/universities. This comes as the state is experiencing a delay in shipment of more than 800,000 testing kits amid a nationwide shortage in COVID-19 testing supplies.

ODH has been making available both the proctored rapid Abbott BinaxNow at-home antigen tests and over-the-counter self-administered tests free to Ohioans at local health departments, public libraries, schools, and other locations. Ohio was one of the first states to prioritize widespread distribution of free rapid testing kits and has distributed about 5.6 million free testing kits – 1.4 million in December alone.

ODH ordered 1.2 million proctored testing kits for January. So far, 400,000 proctored testing kits have been received and are being distributed. Shipment of the remaining 800,000 proctored testing kits has been delayed by the manufacturer as demand for these tests has increased nationwide during the Omicron-driven surge in COVID-19 cases. ODH anticipates receiving shipments later this month. As supply becomes available, the rapid testing kits will first be distributed to meet the needs of K-12 schools and colleges/universities.

COVID-19 tests are a critical tool to help ensure in-person learning can continue in Ohio schools. Ongoing access to these tests helps ensure students and teachers can remain in the classroom. Because schools are experiencing significant new demand for tests as COVID-19 cases continue to climb, the state is temporarily adjusting its allocation strategy to ensure schools receive an adequate supply. As a result, the state is pausing shipments to other community partners, including libraries and local health departments, until inventory and the supply chain have stabilized.

As tests become available after the urgent needs of K-12 schools and higher education institutions are met, the state will again send tests to libraries and local health departments to distribute. Existing and new requests will be processed in the order in which they are received. The state will continue to purchase and distribute these tests to make testing as accessible as possible to Ohioans.

The overall demand for testing in Ohio is exceptionally high, with a seven-day average of more than 94,000 tests per day. It's important to note that tests are available from many sources statewide. While testing supply chains are challenged, over-the-counter rapid testing kits can still be purchased at many locations, such as pharmacies and grocery stores. Testing is also available at many urgent care locations, community health centers, retail locations, and pop-up sites. The ODH website features a searchable map of testing locations at https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/dashboards/other-resources/testing-ch-centers.

Each testing location has its own inventory controls and protocols. When you find a testing location, it's important to call in advance to ensure tests are available and to determine how to access tests.

Testing is an important tool, but only one of the tools available to help protect against COVID-19. Ohioans are urged to follow proven prevention measures to help prevent further spread of the virus. The best thing that Ohioans can do is to stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations. Vaccinations, including timely boosters, combined with masking, social distancing, frequent hand washing, and staying home when sick, can help prevent illness and the need for possible testing.

COVID-19 vaccines are widely available throughout the state. Many providers offer walk-in appointments, or Ohioans can schedule a vaccination appointment at getheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov. Ohioans who want to learn more about the safety, efficacy, and side effects of COVID-19 vaccines should talk to their doctor, nurse, or pharmacist, or visit coronavirus.ohio.gov/vaccine.

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***About the Ohio Department of Health***
*The Ohio Department of Health's mission is advancing the health and well-being of all Ohioans by transforming the state's public health system through unique partnerships and funding streams; addressing the community conditions and inequities that lead to disparities in health outcomes; and implementing data-driven, evidence-based solutions.*