



# NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## COVID-19 TESTING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **General Considerations**

**Q. Why are unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees required to be tested?**

**A.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that fully vaccinated individuals refrain from screening testing. Screening testing is intended to identify infected people who are asymptomatic and do not have known, suspected, or reported exposure to COVID-19. Routine screening testing for COVID-19 is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify cases of COVID-19 early to prevent further transmission and is an effective strategy in the workplace when layered with other measures like symptom screening, masking, and social distancing.

**Q. Are fully vaccinated employees required to be tested each week?**

**A.** No. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), fully vaccinated individuals are not recommended to routinely participate in screening testing. Fully vaccinated people are less likely to become infected and, if infected, to develop symptoms of COVID-19. They are at substantially reduced risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 compared with unvaccinated people. Infections in fully vaccinated people (breakthrough infections) happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated, even with the Delta variant. Moreover, when these infections occur among vaccinated people, they tend to be mild. Any employee, regardless of vaccination status, who develops symptoms should remain home, speak to their medical provider, and are recommended to seek a diagnostic COVID-19 test.

**Q. Is proof of antibodies a substitute for proof of COVID-19 vaccination?**

**A.** No. Employees without proof of full COVID-19 vaccination must submit to a minimum of once weekly COVID-19 testing.

**Q. Does a recent COVID-19 diagnosis exempt an employee from required testing?**

**A.** Unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees who provide documentation from a licensed medical provider of a COVID-19 diagnosis within the last 90 days may be temporarily exempt from required testing for 90-days following the diagnosis.

**Q. Are agencies responsible for ensuring vaccination and testing among contractors?**

**A.** This has not yet been determined and more guidance to agencies will be forthcoming.

**Q. Is this testing available for employees experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or have been exposed?**

**A.** No. This testing is offered to individuals who are not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches, loss of sense of smell or taste, or stomach upset). Those who are experiencing symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19 should self-isolate/quarantine and contact their health care provider.

**Q. Are unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees who travel but do not report to a central office on-site each workday still required to be tested each week?**

**A.** Yes. Any unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee who presents to their regular work site (i.e. in vehicles, in a client home or school, etc.) are required to submit to a minimum of once weekly testing.

**Q. How frequently will employees be tested, and will they be asked to consent to each test?**

**A.** Unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees must submit to COVID-19 testing at least once per week (between Sunday and Saturday of each week) and will be asked to consent to each test and for the release of the result to their employer.

**Q. What leave is available to employees who test positive or are exposed to COVID-19?**

**A.** COVID-19 Sick Leave and COVID-19 Family Leave are available to employees separate and in addition to current sick leave entitlements. The COVID-19 Sick Leave may be used by an employee who is unable to work due to a COVID-19-related isolation or quarantine, is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and is seeking a medical diagnosis or has tested positive for COVID-19, or is the primary caretaker for an individual who is required to isolate or quarantine. Additionally, up to one day of COVID-19 Sick Leave may be used by an employee to receive a COVID-19 vaccination or if the employee is unable to work due to an adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccination. An employee may use up to 10 days of COVID-19 Family Leave if the employee is unable to work because the employee is caring for a child whose school has been closed to in-person instruction or whose child care provider is unavailable due to COVID-19.

**Q. What leave is available to employees who schedule vaccine appointments?**

**A.** With approval from OHR, staff will be granted up to 1 day of leave to receive the vaccination and/or recover from any side effects.

**Q. What if an agency receives a notification from the vendor of a positive test result, but the employee still reports to work?**

- A. Employees must report a positive test result to their agency. Upon learning of a positive case from an employee or the vendor, the agency is responsible for directing the employee to leave the workplace and isolate, [according to CDC guidance](#).
- Q. If an employee is unvaccinated due to medical contraindications or requested religious exemption, does the employee still have to be tested weekly?**
- A. Yes. Any unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee must submit to testing at least once per week.
- Q. What happens if an employee declines to be tested due to a medical issue, disability, or other requested exemption?**
- A. To be exempt from testing, an employee must submit a request for accommodation pursuant to the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), N.J.S.A., 10:5-1 et seq., the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq., or other applicable law. Agencies should address any request for accommodation under the LAD, ADA, or other applicable law in the normal course.
- Q. What happens if an employee declines to be tested and has not been granted an accommodation pursuant to applicable law?**
- A. Employees without an approved accommodation who do not comply with the agency's testing requirements will be subject to discipline in accordance with existing disciplinary procedures. Agencies should notify employees of the result of noncompliance and should discuss such notice with union representatives prior to release of the notice.
- Q. What type of test is being provided to unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees?**
- A. The existing vendor, Vault, offers a Saliva PCR test. The test is a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Emergency Use Authorization authorized molecular test that uses a quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) to identify the presence of viral transcripts which, if present, confirm an active infection of COVID-19.
- Q. How reliable is this test?**
- A. The test provided by Vault meets FDA sensitivity and specificity standards for the detection of COVID-19. The use of saliva as the primary test material is directly comparable to all other sample types currently used for testing. Positive test results are very reliable; however, an individual could be tested too early in the course of their illness to detect the virus, resulting in a false negative test.
- Q. What type of sample is required, and how will it be collected?**
- A. The testing program utilizes the Saliva PCR test to identify virus particles. Saliva is deposited into a test tube, similar to giving a specimen for the well-known commercial genetic testing companies. As compared with the nasopharyngeal swab method, this testing method reduces risk of transmission, reduces use of personal protective equipment, and can be done at home or on-site in the workplace.

### **Scheduling and Payment**

**Q. If an unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee does not enter the workplace during a week (e.g., on vacation or working remotely), must the covered worker submit testing for that week?**

**A.** If the unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee is not physically on-site in their workplace (i.e. in vehicles, in a client home or school, etc.) during a week where testing would otherwise be required, the worker is not required to submit to testing for that week. Employees are permitted to report to the workplace before they have been tested that week, or before their result has been processed, so long as they are asymptomatic.

**Q. Is the employee obligated to schedule the test and travel to the site?**

**A.** DCF will work with Vault to ensure that testing is made available to eligible employees. This may include the completion of at-home testing, supervised self-administered tests in the workplace, or testing performed by a medical professional on-site at the workplace or at an alternative, central location. DCF management will determine the required testing method and testing schedule for employees.

**Q. When will testing be completed by employees?**

**A.** Most employees will be tested during work hours on a schedule provided by each agency.

**Q. Will employees be responsible for paying for the test? Will the employees' insurance be billed for the test?**

**A.** No. Testing provided by DCF is at zero cost to employees. Testing will be provided to employees, and employees will not be asked to provide insurance information, nor will they be charged for fees related to COVID-19 testing.

**Q. If an employee's test is positive, will the employee be responsible for paying for follow-up care if needed?**

**A.** The employee should review their medical insurance coverage regarding follow up care.

### **Testing Sites**

**Q. Who will be administering the test and what are their qualifications?**

**A.** The tests will be self-administered and supervised by testing vendor staff/trained agency staff or performed by a medical professional. More information will be provided by the testing vendors.

**Q. Will the test provider require any temperature and symptom screening prior to administering the test?**

A. More information will be provided by Vault.

### **Communication and Interpretation of Results**

**Q. When will the results be provided to employees, and in what confidential manner?**

A. Test results will be provided via email to the employee and with employee consent, will be provided to a limited number of state agency staff through a HIPAA-compliant platform.

**Q. Will the testing vendor or the state report a positive result to anyone?**

A. The entity conducting the test, Vault, will be responsible for reporting positive tests to the local health department and NJDOH Communicable Disease Service as required by state law. Results will also be shared, with employee consent, with a limited number of state agency staff through a secure, HIPAA-compliant platform for compliance monitoring.

**Q. What happens if the employee tests positive?**

A. If an employee test result is positive, they will receive an email notification with instructions to isolate (remain home), monitor their symptoms, and follow existing protocols for isolation and inform any close contacts in the work place about quarantining, [according to CDC guidance](#). An agency should ensure employees are informed about COVID-19 sick leave time available for quarantine and isolation.

If an employee test positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms and continues to have no symptoms, the employee must isolate and may return to work/be around others after 10 days have passed since the positive test for COVID-19

If an asymptomatic, unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee participates in screening testing and their result is positive but the employee provides documentation from a medical provider to the agency of a COVID-19 diagnosis within the previous 90 days and has completed appropriate isolation, the employee does not need to be excluded from the workplace.

**Q. If an employee tests positive, does the employee need to retest prior to coming back to work?**

A. No. Employees should follow existing agency protocols for isolation [according to CDC guidance](#).

### **Privacy**

**Q. What personal information does the employee need to provide (e.g., name, date of birth) to the test provider?**

A. Employees will electronically enter their name, date of birth, and email address before completing testing with Vault. Depending on the platform used by the agency to track vaccination status, the

employee may also enter their vaccination information when they first register with the testing platform.

**Q. How will personal information and test results be kept confidential and secure (i.e., restricted from unauthorized access or disclosure)?**

A. Any information provided to agency staff/employers must be maintained confidentially and stored separately from the employee's personnel file, thus limiting access to this confidential information. An employer may store all medical information related to COVID-19 in existing medical files.

**Q. Which employer representative(s) will have access to the employee's result?**

A. Each agency (or division depending on the agency's size) will assign a limited number of staff (up to 3 and no less than 1) to access Vault's secure and HIPAA-compliant dashboard that contains employee information and test results.

*Seeking Additional Help*

**Q. Who should employees contact for additional information about the state worker testing program (e.g., an employer or union representative)?**

A. Agencies must inform their employees about where to get more information about the testing program and who to contact with questions about the program and employee rights and requests for accommodations for accessing testing (or testing sites).

**Q. How can an employee access testing if they are experiencing symptoms or have a known exposure?**

A. Free testing is provided in each NJ county and can be located on the [NJ COVID-19 Information Hub here](#).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ensures that COVID-19 tests are available at no cost nationwide at health centers and select pharmacies:

Find a health center near you. Please call ahead to make an appointment.

- CVS Health
- Local independent pharmacies
- Rite Aid
- Walgreens
- Walmart in partnership with Quest Diagnostics

**Q. How can employees request a new vaccination card if they lost their COVID-19 vaccination card?**

A. If you lost your COVID-19 vaccination card, you can request your immunization record by visiting the [New Jersey Immunization Information System \(NJIS\) website](#). Once on this page, complete the following actions:

- Click on "Submit a Request" from the top blue ribbon.
- Click "I want to request a copy of my immunization record from NJIS", which will open a form which you need to complete. Note: You will need to attach a copy of your photo ID. Acceptable forms of ID include: a state-issued photo driver's license with address; a state-issued photo non-

driver's identification card with address; a similar form of identification issued by this State, another state, or the Federal government; or a photo identification card issued by a New Jersey County Clerk.

- If you wish to have a copy of the COVID-19 vaccine lot number, please write this in the description section of the ticket.
- Click "Send" to submit your request, and your request will typically be processed within 24-48 business hours.
- Note: All immunization records will be mailed. They cannot be emailed.

More information can be found at: <https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/slowing-the-spread/how-do-i-get-a-new-copy-of-my-covid-19-vaccination-card-is-there-an-app-or-a-digital-copy>.