

August 5, 2022

Dear CPS Families and Staff,

We hope that you have been enjoying your summer, and that you are getting excited about returning to school on Monday, August 22.

Below you will find critical information about COVID-19 safety protocols, procedures, and programs for this upcoming school year. Unfortunately, this virus is still with us, and will be with us for the foreseeable future. The good news is that much progress has been made with regard to COVID-19. As more Chicagoans have gotten vaccinated and boosted, we are seeing fewer cases result in hospitalization or death — which is why we encourage everyone aged 6 months and older to get vaccinated and stay up to date on their boosters if eligible. The widespread availability of therapeutics for treatment and rapid take-home COVID-19 tests offer additional measures of prevention and safety.

At CPS, we will continue to have additional layers of protection in our schools. We will share more details as the first day approaches, but the information below should give you a clear picture of our District's plan to ensure a safe in-person learning environment and a successful school year for students and staff.

### **In-School COVID Testing**

We are glad to announce that CPS will continue to provide in-school COVID-19 surveillance testing through our partners at Thermo Fisher. Last year, CPS administered over 1.5 million COVID-19 tests to CPS students and staff.

- **IMPORTANT: Every CPS student or staff member who wants to enroll in weekly testing this school year MUST complete a new consent form. Consents from last school year or this summer WILL NOT be valid for the 2022-23 school year.**
- Parents or guardians can [click here](#) to complete this year's consent form. Once consent is given for the 2022-23 school year, staff and students will remain consented until they leave CPS.
- Please refer to [this guide](#) if you need assistance in filling out the consent form.
- You will need your staff or student's ID number to complete the form.
- We strongly encourage our unvaccinated students and staff to enroll in the program
- Testing will begin the week of August 29. For the first week of school, starting August 22, each student and staff member will be given a take-home rapid COVID-19 test.

### **NEW: Test to Stay**

After hearing positive feedback on the Test to Stay program that was piloted at dozens of schools last year and during summer programs, we will be offering unvaccinated students and staff the ability to Test to Stay in school if they are exposed to COVID-19, as long as they remain symptom-free. As cases are identified, unvaccinated close contacts will be offered the opportunity to participate in the program on a rolling basis.

- During our Test to Stay pilot last school year, only 1.5 percent of those identified as close contacts later tested positive for COVID-19. In addition, Test to Stay has been endorsed by the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH).

- Here's how Test to Stay works:
  - If an unvaccinated student or staff member is identified as a close contact of someone who tests positive for COVID-19, they will have three options:
    - Continue to work/learn in-person by submitting proof of full vaccination to their school and wearing a mask through day 10 after exposure.
    - Continue to work/learn in person by participating in the Test to Stay program and wearing a mask through day 10 after exposure.
    - Work/learn from home for five calendar days and then wear a mask in school through day 10 after exposure.
- Those who exercise the Test to Stay option must:
  - Obtain two at-home rapid COVID-19 tests from their school or supply their own [FDA-approved](#) at-home rapid tests
  - Conduct two at home tests on the immediate Monday and Thursday following exposure and submit their results to [cps.edu/covidresults](https://cps.edu/covidresults)
  - Remain symptom-free and wear a mask in school for 10 calendar days following exposure.
- There is no action for parents or staff members to take at this time; if you or your student are unvaccinated and identified as a close contact during the course of the school year, you will receive a message from CPS inviting you to participate in Test to Stay.

### **COVID-19 Vaccinations and Boosters**

Last school year and over the summer, CPS held more than 1,700 COVID-19 vaccination events, serving over 23,000 patients. CPS will continue our robust COVID-19 vaccination program this school year. Vaccines and boosters will continue to be available for CPS students and their families, as well as staff and volunteers, through our four regional clinics, our 22 school-based health centers, and our mobile vaccine program, which visits schools across the city, prioritizing those communities with the lowest vaccination rates.

- Vaccines are safe, effective, free, and widely available to everyone aged 6 months and up. They are the best tool we have to keep our school communities safe against COVID-19.
- The recommended initial vaccine series — either the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine or the Moderna vaccine — require two shots. If you've only gotten one shot, please get your second shot to complete your initial vaccine series. All Chicagoans over aged 5 and up are eligible for a booster five months after completing their initial vaccine series. All Chicagoans aged 50 and up, and Chicagoans aged 12-49 with certain chronic health conditions, are eligible for a second booster four months after their first booster.
- To get more information on vaccines and boosters or to make an appointment, visit [cps.edu/vaccinations](https://cps.edu/vaccinations)

### **Masking**

Masks will continue to be strongly recommended for all students and staff this school year. In certain situations — following exposure, an outbreak, or at the direction of CDPH — masking may be required.

### **Contact Tracing**

Every CPS school will maintain a contact tracing team to investigate COVID-19 cases within the school community and notify families and staff members of actions they need to take to keep the school community safe.

- This school year, elementary schools will engage in “group” contact tracing; meaning that if one student in a classroom tests positive, every individual in that classroom will be identified as a close contact. Those who are vaccinated will be able to remain in school; those who are unvaccinated will be offered the option to Test to Stay to remain in-person in school following exposure.
- In high schools, close contacts will be identified based on proximity to the positive individual in the classroom. Those who are vaccinated will be able to remain in school; those who are unvaccinated will be offered the option to Test to Stay to remain in-person in school following exposure.

### **Facilities/Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

CPS has replaced the filters in all of our air purifiers and is in the process of cleaning every school to prepare for the new year. We will also continue providing PPE to any student or staff member who needs it.

We understand that there is nothing more important to our families than the health and safety of your children, and we want you to know that this is our top priority as well coming into the new school year. Just as we have done since the start of the pandemic, CPS will make all decisions based on science, and will rely on the expertise of our public health partners as we work to create safe learning environments and maintain the in-person learning our students need to reach their full potential.

We thank you for your continued support and look forward to welcoming all of your children back to their classrooms on Monday, August 22 for the first day of the 2022-23 school year.

Sincerely,

Pedro Martinez  
Chief Executive Officer  
Chicago Public Schools