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Executive Director

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Dear Staff,

There have been some recent updates to the [DCIU and DCTS Health and Safety Plan](#). Some key highlights are:

- Links the DCIU Health and Safety Plan Questions and Answers (Q and A) document into plan.
- Removed language regarding Pennsylvania's categorizing reopening of three broad phases: red, yellow, or green. These designations are not being used at this time.
- Identifying and Restricting Non-Essential Visitors and Volunteers section updated. Language clarifies DCIU will continue not to permit visitors and travel. The plan also indicates when this restriction is lifted, it will be outlined in the Q and A document.
- Provides information on the requirement that all staff and contractors must use the online self-reporting form when an individual was in close contact with someone with COVID, has COVID symptoms, is COVID positive or negative, and other scenarios. This form assists in gathering the necessary data for making a determination. One can view this form by going to the DCIU website and click on *COVID-19 Reporting* icon in the red banner. The plan requires all staff and contractors to use this form.
- States that DCIU will follow the face covering order from the PA Secretary of Health.
- Added a new section that DCIU will implement a testing program when it becomes available. More information about this later in the letter.

TESTING PROGRAM COMING SOON!

DCIU is excited to announce that we will be offering rapid antigen testing to all staff in our effort to continue to put strategies in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The program is called **ACE-IT, Assisting Childhood Education Through Increased Testing**, and it is being offered in the southeast region of Pennsylvania. This assurance testing is possible due to a partnership with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and the Chester County Health Department.

With this testing, DCIU does not expect a high number of positive test results as people who have been exposed to the virus and those with symptoms should not be reporting to work or school. The program is a safeguard for identifying people who may unknowingly carry the virus.

DCIU plans to conduct two types of testing:

- **Weekly Assurance Testing:** The priority usage of the tests will be for the purpose of weekly assurance testing. Our goal is to screen all staff and contractors and identified students with complex special education needs on a weekly basis.
- **Symptomatic Testing During Work or School Day:** The intermediate unit may conduct testing of staff or students who present symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, work or who are in various

programs. This testing is only for individuals who become symptomatic while at work or school. Please remember, you are required to stay home if you are ill.

At the end of the letter, there are questions and answers providing a more in-depth overview of the testing program.

VACCINE UPDATE

As many of you are aware, the implementation of vaccines across our country has been arduous and slow. According to a January 15 Chester County Health Department [CCHD] report, there have been 11,420 people who have received the first dose of vaccine and 1,946 individuals that have received the two-dose requirement of the vaccine in Delaware County. Our county is still administering the vaccine to the 1a group¹. However, other counties in Pennsylvania have begun vaccinating the 1b group, which includes all educators. Unfortunately, this seems to be commonplace with the implementation.

A couple of weeks ago, CCHD put out a vaccine survey for the 1b group. DCIU has completed this survey on behalf of staff and contractors who work at the intermediate unit. At this time, DCIU does not have information on when the vaccines will be available for the 1b group in Delaware County. Once DCIU is notified of our county's plan, I will let you know.

I also acknowledge that some individuals have been able to get the vaccine. DCIU will soon be creating a form so we can gather who in our organization has received the vaccine. The link will be posted on the DCIU website under the *COVID-19 Reporting* icon.

FRIENDLY REMINDERS

Please remember to wear your mask at work and when you are out. We know that wearing a mask protects you and others. If you are ill, stay home. It is important to follow this although many want to come to school to support students. Remember to socially distance whenever feasible. We know these are all important strategy to help mitigate the spread of the virus. We cannot get complacent with implementing our health and safety protocols.

All of our actions, whether at work or at home, contribute to our ability to implement strong mitigation strategies. Thank you for your continued hard work and efforts.

Sincerely,



Maria Edelberg

¹ Healthcare workers, EMS, coroners and funeral staff, medical examiner, school nurses, and clinicians (the list is not exhaustive).

Delaware County Intermediate

What is Project: ACE-IT?

School districts and health organizations [CHOP and local health departments] across southeast Pennsylvania are committed to keeping staff and students healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. That is the basis of **Project: ACE-IT** (Assisting Childhood Education through Increased Testing). This is a collaborative regional effort offering in-school, rapid COVID-19 testing for children and staff who become sick during the school day and weekly assurance testing for staff and high-risk students. It is voluntarily and free of charge. This document offers information on the tests and the testing program.



What is the role of the Chester County Health Department [CCHD], Children's Hospital of Philadelphia [CHOP], and the DCIU?

CHOP is providing access to tests and technical assistance to the program. CCHD is directing the project. DCIU is developing plans for implementation in our schools and buildings, acting as a county resource to our school districts, and will play a pivotal role in test distribution in our county.

What COVID-19 tests are being used in this program and why?

This program primarily uses [BinaxNOW™ tests](#), which provide results in 15 minutes and are administered using a nasal swab in the *front area* of the nostril. These [antigen](#) tests are highly accurate, detecting 97%-98% of symptomatic individuals. If the person tested receives an unexpected result — meaning they are symptomatic but receive a negative result, or they are asymptomatic and receive a positive result — they may be referred for another more sensitive test, such as the [Cue Health](#), or a molecular test, such as a PCR. Referrals for additional testing will be communicated promptly to the staff member or parent/guardian of a student as needed. For more information on different types of COVID-19 tests, click [here](#).

Who will be tested and when?

Each school district will determine the testing model that works best—including who administers the tests—for their students and staff, using the strongest public health guidance available. Local health departments will be instrumental in supporting this process. Project: ACE-IT's current [allotment of tests](#) provide for: 1) symptomatic testing of students and staff, and 2) weekly asymptomatic or *assurance* testing of staff and limited groups of students between January and April 2021. All testing will be targeted to students and staff who are participating in in-person education or support in-person instruction. ***It is important to reiterate, if you are ill, do not come to work.*** The symptomatic testing is not

intended for individuals or students who are sick and are at home. It is only for students and staff who become ill while at work.

What is the difference between testing symptomatic persons and the assurance testing of staff and students?



The assurance testing program focuses on asymptomatic staff and high-risk students with special education needs. The goal of this weekly testing is to identify individuals who may be infectious, as early as possible, to further increase the safety of schools. Over time, these programs have been found to greatly reduce the number of COVID positive individuals in college settings. The goal is to provide the same type of additional safety to our schools and programs.

The assurance testing program is intended to be voluntary, but **we are encouraging full participation** of all staff and families of students with special needs to participate. This will provide DCIU with increased success in lowering rates of unsuspected asymptomatic COVID positive individuals in the schools and offices.

Assurance testing is targeted to be done weekly.

Can the test be administered by non-medical personnel?

Yes, the Secretary of Health Order provides flexibility for this, so long as a healthcare professional is accessible while testing is occurring. The BinaxNow tests is also considered a “waived test” by the FDA, which allows for non-healthcare personnel to administer. Individual DCIU staff will self-collect the specimen weekly at a time and location determined by the intermediate unit. *This test will also soon be available for individuals to self-administer at home through a prescription from your doctor.*

How will the test be administered?

DCIU plans to have staff self-administer the test. It is very simple for an individual to collect a sample. Support staff will be present to guide and support staff through the process. Administration of the test by students will be determined based on the needs our populations.



What will happen if a person tests positive? And how about a person who tests negative?

Symptomatic people who test positive will be assumed to be *COVID positive* as recommended by the CDC.

Asymptomatic people who test positive will be referred to a local testing site within the county for confirmation with a molecular test (also as recommended by the CDC). To be considered a true asymptomatic COVID positive, both tests will need to be positive.

Asymptomatic individuals testing negative are cleared for work or being in school. If an individual who becomes symptomatic at work or school and tests negative, the individual will be sent home. Further directions will be provided.



What directions regarding quarantining/leaving the building will be given to any person who tests positive on a rapid antigen test?

All individuals who test positive will be asked to gather their belongings. If they were asymptomatic and tested positive by a rapid antigen test, they will be referred for a confirmatory molecular test. If the confirmatory test is positive, they will be asked to isolate per health department instructions. All symptomatic people who test positive by rapid antigen test will be presumed COVID positive and will also be asked to leave the building. Contact tracing will be provided to safely quarantine other exposed individuals within the intermediate unit location. The identification of symptomatic positives through rapid tests will permit expedited decisions on quarantine and isolation. DCIU's safety procedures will follow the current [DCIU Health and Safety Plan](#).

If I (or my students) feel sick, can I (they) come to the school to be tested?



No staff or students are allowed to enter a school building if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or have [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#). Instead, one will need to get a COVID-19 test at a local testing site. Information on of testing sites can be obtained by going to the [Chester County Health Department](#) website. This safety protocol is critical to the safety of the school and the intermediate unit community. In-school testing will only be available

to staff and students who come to school feeling healthy but begin to feel symptomatic during the school day.

How will a staff member or a student learn about the outcome of the test results, and how will this information be used?

Staff and families of students tested will receive results via text or email shortly after they are known. All test results will be shared with the local health department as required for public health reporting and contact tracing, as well as to determine the stay-at-home period for those testing positive. Intermediate unit staff will also be able to quickly isolate when a student or staff member tests positive. All data is protected and transferred via a secure server.



DCIU is also in the process of developing additional protocols to communicate with parents/guardians about their child if they become symptomatic and are tested. All testing of students shall with be the consent of the students' parent or guardian.

Are contractors working at DCIU eligible for the assurance testing?

Yes. DCIU welcomes contractors to participate in the weekly assurance testing. You will need to commit to weekly testing.

What happens next?

DCIU is in the process of developing protocols and plans for the testing program implementation. Our goal is to be implementing testing for students and staff who become symptomatic during the school day by the end of January 2021. **It is important to reiterate that no student or staff shall come to school or work if they are sick or symptomatic. They must stay home.**

DCIU's hope is assurance testing for staff and identified groups of students will be fully operational by the beginning of February 2021. Program administration at your location can provide more details as plans are finalized.

