



COVID-19 Testing Team Overview

July 2021

Purpose: Testing is an essential tool for keeping COVID-19 in check. It allows us to prevent outbreaks, track variants, and provide additional support to those infected.

Long-Term Goal: Our long-term goal is to ensure that testing remains a permanent fixture in our community, with testing available in accessible locations and for populations who are most in need. ‘

Current Projects

Diagnostic and screening testing in schools

The Learn to Return program, in partnership with Health Commons Project, enables districts to conduct diagnostic and screening testing, allowing schools to catch cases quickly and prevent spread.

Agricultural worker testing

This program, in partnership with Medical Teams International, provides testing of seasonal agricultural workers when they arrive in Washington and a week after their arrival. Farms can also initiate further testing, as needed.

Pharmacy testing

DOH has worked with Walgreens to offer no-cost testing in their drive-thru locations. DOH is also working with independent pharmacies to offer testing, in partnership with the Washington State Pharmacy Association.

Emergency Medical Services

DOH is working with first responders to incorporate COVID-19 testing as part of their protocols when they attend to someone who presents symptoms.

Expansion of testing in rural areas

Rural areas face challenges in providing quick access to COVID-19 testing. For that reason, DOH is working to fill these gaps by enlisting libraries, religious institutions, community centers, and other partners to offer testing resources.

Expansion of at-home tests

Self-administered tests at home are an important tool for expanding access. DOH is supporting local health jurisdictions in making at-home tests more widely available, for example, by facilitating bulk orders.

Past Successes

- In 2020, outbreaks occurred across farms in Central and Eastern Washington. The agricultural worker testing program has prioritized counties that were hard hit earlier in the pandemic and targeted resources to the places most in need prior to the growing season.
- School testing has helped facilitate a return to classroom learning. The Learn to Return program, which began as a small pilot, now serves 168+ districts in 34 out of 39 counties and more than 600,000 students.
- Performed more than 160,000 tests since January 2021 through a partnership with Walgreens pharmacies, which offer no-cost COVID-19 tests at drive-thru locations across the state.
- DOH has supported distribution of testing supplies to local health jurisdictions, long-term care facilities, correctional facilities, critical access hospitals, and schools. This includes distribution of more than 2 million federally allocated BinaxNow rapid antigen tests.

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