

California Department of Public Health COVID-19 Testing Options

Below are a few free testing options available through the California Department of Public Health. Schools and districts may choose to pursue other options.

Name of Lab/Product	Software	Type of Test	Time to Results	Cost/Funding	Best Application	Other Notes
Valencia Branch Labs Lab PCR	Color	NAAT ¹	24-48 hours	Free; ELC ² funded	Recommended for surveillance screening.	Laboratory-based, most sensitive. Good for large populations. Transportation via courier drop box. <i>At home tests being piloted, available this fall.</i>
Binax NOW Rapid Antigen	Primary.health	POC ³ Rapid Antigen Test ⁴ (with reflex PCR for positive results)	15-20 minutes (plus 24-48 hours for PCR reflex)	Free	Point of care evaluation of symptomatic individuals. Not recommended for surveillance of asymptomatic individuals.	Requires training. Staff resources heavy during testing. Onsite "lab" (CLIA - provided by state) <i>At home tests being piloted, available this fall.</i>
CUE Rapid Molecular	Primary.health	POC; NAAT	20 minutes	Free; funded by HHSA (Department of Health and Human Services)	Mobile platform is small and portable, optimal for deployment to remote, outbreak and crisis situation. Best for symptomatic individuals, close contacts, follow-up to antigen. Not recommended for high volume testing due to the number of devices needed.	Staff resources heavy if used for surveillance of large population. Requires CLIA (provided by state). <i>Out of stock as of August 6, 2021.</i>
Pooled Testing	GinkoBioworks	POOLED ⁵ ; NAAT (Reflex Rapid Antigen testing provided)	24-48 hours (plus follow-up time for positive pools)	Free	Surveillance testing of unvaccinated, asymptomatic groups when there is a low prevalence of cases, meaning more negative results are expected than positive results. Good for K-6 and sports teams. Not best for 7-12 mixed classes.	Less specific. Follow up would be needed for positive pools. <i>Was piloted by Menlo Park City SD, which plans to use it for surveillance screening this fall.</i>

¹ **NAAT (Nucleic Acid Amplification Test):** A type of viral diagnostic test for SARS-CoV-2 that detects genetic material (e.g. PCR).

² **ELC (Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Infectious Diseases):** A \$10 billion fund to help jurisdictions combat infectious diseases.

³ **POC (Point of Care):** The process of medical diagnostic testing occurs at the time and place of patient care.

⁴ **Rapid Antigen Test:** Detects fragments of proteins found on or within the virus. Very specific for the virus, but not as sensitive as molecular PCR tests.

⁵ **Pooled:** Mixing several samples together in a "batch" or pooled sample, then testing the pooled sample with a diagnostic test.

⁶ **CLIA (Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment):** A lab waiver provided by the State of California.

Goals of Testing for COVID-19

Keeping Track of COVID-19

What Tests: Pooled PCR, Antigen, Lab-based PCR

Population: 10% of elementary classrooms and/or 10% of unvaccinated staff and students

Frequency: Once at the start of school year and then every other week or monthly

Preventing Outbreaks

What Tests: Pooled PCR, Antigen, Lab-based PCR

Population: All unvaccinated students and staff

Frequency: one time per week for PCR and Pooled PCR; two times a week for Antigen

Responding to School Outbreaks

What Tests: Lab-based PCR, Antigen, Rapid molecular (CUE)

Population: All exposed unvaccinated students and staff, all symptomatic individuals regardless of vaccination status

Frequency: Beginning of quarantine and to modify quarantine if appropriate

Helping Kids Stay in School

What Tests: Lab-based PCR, Antigen, Rapid Molecular (CUE)

Population: Symptomatic staff or students, regardless of vaccination status and/or unvaccinated students who are close contacts, to remain in school for a modified quarantine

Frequency: As needed