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Illinois Department of Public Health to Offer Free covidSHIELD Tests for Illinois Public Schools for 2022-23 School Year

Federally funded effort aims to control virus spread in schools

SPRINGFIELD —The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today announced a renewed agreement with SHIELD Illinois that offers every public school outside of Chicago the opportunity to use the University of Illinois System’s innovative, saliva-based COVID-19 testing platform at no cost for the 2022-23 school year.

SHIELD Illinois provides on-demand saliva-based PCR tests through weekly screening testing at Illinois schools, businesses and government agencies. The U of I System’s non-profit, in-state COVID-testing unit, SHIELD Illinois has administered 6.4 million tests as of this month.

Schools interested in renewing with SHIELD or beginning a partnership should sign up by July 15 in order to guarantee testing on the first day of school.

“Schools remain an important place for testing and preventing the spread of infection,” said Interim IDPH Director Amaal Tokars, Ph.D. “We want to do everything possible to prevent sickness among our children, which is why this renewal and continued testing is critical.”

SHIELD Illinois provided testing for about 1 million students and staff in K-12 schools during the 2021-22 school year; 57 community colleges and universities; numerous businesses, such as Rivian and ADM; and government agencies, including the Illinois General Assembly and the U.S. District Court of the Northern District. It also opened 48 free community testing sites. So far in 2022, SHIELD Illinois has supplied results for its gold-standard PCR tests on average 16 hours from the time of collection.

According to a study published [June 9 in Nature Communications](#), mortality in the surrounding Champaign County was reduced more than four-fold relative to what would have been predicted in Fall 2020 thanks to aggressive testing on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus.



“We are honored to renew our partnership with the state for another school year as this pandemic continues to demonstrate a high level of unpredictability and an ongoing need for quick, reliable testing,” said University of Illinois System President Timothy Killeen. “I want to thank the hard-working team at SHIELD Illinois for carrying the U of I System banner with distinction and for keeping our schools safe. It’s a wonderful example of how research and innovation at the University of Illinois are contributing to the health and well-being of our citizens, particularly in times of crisis.”

Testing in Illinois is paid for with federal funds from the CARES Act, American Rescue Plan and Operation Expanded Testing.

Federal funding for public school testing in Illinois comes from IDPH and the Midwest Coordination Center. Federal funding for testing in private schools comes from the Midwest Coordination Center.

A separate testing agreement with the Chicago Department of Public Health covers testing in non-CPS schools in Chicago, including private, parochial and charter schools. Chicago Public Schools are not included because they are receiving direct federal funding for their own testing program.

Organizations inside Illinois who are interested in using the SHIELD saliva test should visit go.uillinois.edu/startSHIELD. Interested organizations outside of Illinois should contact Shield T3 at shieldt3.com or email inquiries@shieldt3.com.

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About the University of Illinois System

The University of Illinois System is a world leader in research and discovery, and the largest educational institution in the state with more than 90,000 students, about 26,000 full-time equivalent faculty and staff, and universities in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield. The U of I System awards more than 23,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees annually.

About covidSHIELD

Pioneered by researchers at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, covidSHIELD is a comprehensive solution to curb and control the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19. The covidSHIELD testing process is currently in use across the University of Illinois System.