

## **PRESS RELEASE...**

### **10 Warren County School Districts to Pilot ODH's Test & Stay Program**

The superintendents of public-school districts in Warren County extend our thanks to the Warren County Commissioners for their willingness to provide funding for the employment of school nurses. Commission President Dave Young and his fellow Commissioners Tom Grossmann and Shannon Jones support the pilot project that will reduce quarantines of healthy students in Warren County schools.



Students who are exposed to COVID 19 but who do not have any symptoms of illness will not be required to quarantine if they have a negative test at day 3 and again between days 5 to 7. This adds a significant amount of new work to school nurses, and they cannot be successful without additional assistance. The Warren County Commissioners have allocated federal dollars the County received for COVID relief to allow the Warren County Educational Service Center to employ these nurses on behalf of the school districts.

The Ohio Department of Health is piloting a Test & Stay program in 10 Warren County districts that will begin the week of September 27. Test & Stay is a testing initiative for asymptomatic close contacts of students with confirmed COVID-19. This testing program will allow asymptomatic close contacts to remain in school if they receive an individual rapid antigen test (BinaxNOW) two times during their quarantine period and test negative, as well as wear a face mask while inside their school.

Participating districts include Carlisle Local Schools, Clinton-Massie Local Schools, Franklin City Schools, Kings Local Schools, Lebanon City Schools, Little Miami Local Schools, Mason City Schools, Springboro Community Schools, Wayne Local Schools, the Warren County Career Center and Warren County Educational Service Center.

“We appreciate having another option that families can choose if their child needs to quarantine due to close contact exposure at school. As we all learn to live with COVID-19, we knew as school districts that we needed a more strategic approach to quarantine. Keeping healthy kids at school and sending sick kids home to get better is better for everyone,” said Jonathan Cooper, Mason City Schools Superintendent.

ODH is providing the participating districts with Abbot BinaxNow Rapid Antigen Professional Test kits and Abbott BinaxNOW At-Home Test kits. School districts may administer professional tests at school to identified close contact students. Additionally, families may opt to test their child at home, and then utilize a telehealth session to oversee test administration and result reporting. All families using the at home test kit should follow the Ohio Department of Health User Guide: [Abbott BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Card Home Test Kit – User Guide](#).

“Until more people are vaccinated, testing will be an important tool to keep K-12 students and staff in school, in-person, five days a week. We know it is critical for our children’s health and well-being that their schools remain open and are hopeful that this pilot will be able to be replicated throughout the state,” said Dr. Bruce Vanderhoof, Director of ODH.

Currently, the pilot only applies to students who are close contacts due to exposure at school, not through a community exposure or school-sponsored activity exposure. Families whose student has been identified as a close contact will have the option to participate in the pilot to stay in school, or they may quarantine for 10 days at home, or

return to school on day 8 with proof of a negative test on day 5, 6, or 7. Students who are wearing a face mask or are vaccinated do not need to quarantine.

Warren County is partnering with the school districts and county commissioners approved using federal COVID-19 funds to provide a nurse for each district to help with testing and pilot implementation.

“We believe in the power of partnership in Warren County. Our school districts saw a problem and wanted to be part of the solution. We appreciate the Governor and Dr. Vanderhoof and their teams’ work to create this Test & Stay pilot. We are also grateful to the County Commissioners for their quick decision to use their federal funds to help us keep our schools open with this pilot,” said Tom Isaacs, Superintendent Warren County ESC.