

**February 1, 2022**

**Memorandum to:** Directors of Education  
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

**From:** Julia Danos  
Executive Lead

**Subject:** **Update on COVID-19 Testing Strategy for Ontario Schools**

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to distribute rapid antigen testing (RAT) for **symptomatic** students, children and staff.

As of January 21, all school boards and child care centres have received their shipments of rapid antigen tests. These shipments were targeted to the following groups, listed in order of priority as follows: elementary school students; children aged 0-4 in co-located child care centres; child care and education staff; and secondary school students. We recognize the work undertaken thus far in distributing these tests, and we ask that you continue to make every effort to distribute these tests to students, children and staff as soon as possible.

### **Ongoing distribution of rapid antigen tests**

To support school boards with an ongoing supply of tests, the ministry plans to begin distributing additional RATs on a bi-weekly basis. The next distribution began the week of January 24, 2022 and is expected to begin to arrive in school boards in the week beginning January 31, 2022.

This distribution will provide an additional 3.6M RATs, in addition to the 5.2M rapid antigen tests that have already been provided for public schools/child care in 2022.

The ministry will provide a bi-weekly replenishment that is intended to provide two tests for 30% of the total enrolment/staff head count for schools and child care centres. This level of test replenishment reflects current provincial supply.

RAT kits (containing two tests) should only be provided to students/staff when they return from an unplanned absence or dismissal at school/child care and require more tests in the event of another episode of absence.

Similar to the first shipment, rapid antigen tests will be distributed in bulk shipments containing boxes of 5-25 individual tests. School boards can make decisions locally as to whether to kit centrally or kit upon request at the school level. Each kit should include two individual tests.

As school boards and schools have already provided an initial supply of two tests per student/staff, we ask that school boards/schools consider undertaking de-kitting as required. This could involve pre-positioning full boxes of tests at each school and making individual kits of two tests as needed. Please see de-kitting instructions below in **Appendix 1: De-Kitting Instructions**.

### **PCR self-collection testing kits**

As a reminder, the remaining PCR self-collection testing kits that are already in schools may be distributed with a targeted focus on students and staff who develop symptoms commonly associated with COVID-19 while at school. Schools can deplete their existing supply of PCR self-collection kits during this transition to rapid antigen tests across the sector.

### **Updated guidance for the use of rapid antigen tests**

Please note that the Chief Medical Officer of Health has updated guidance for anyone who has had a positive test result (molecular/PCR or RAT). Individuals who receive a positive test result should not participate in antigen testing for **30 days** from their COVID-19 infection (based on the date of their symptom onset or test). After this period, symptomatic individuals can resume COVID-19 rapid antigen testing in accordance with the [Interim Guidance for Schools and Child Care during the Omicron Surge](#).

### **Rapid antigen testing to support school board immunization policies**

School boards will continue to receive rapid antigen tests to support their immunization disclosure policy which covers staff and other individuals who may have regular and direct contact with staff or children; however, please note that current provincial supply means that full boxes cannot be provided to these individuals.

Boards, schools, and child care centres are encouraged to provide individuals with enough tests to cover one to two weeks of testing at a time (i.e., three to six rapid antigen tests). This may require de-kitting of boxes in order to provide sufficient supply on a weekly/bi-weekly basis for asymptomatic screening, in accordance with the immunization policy. Please see Appendix 1 for de-kitting instructions.

Moving forward, school boards will not be required to re-order rapid antigen tests for either symptomatic use under the updated guidance or for asymptomatic screening under the immunization disclosure policy. Shipments will be automatically delivered at the same quantity on a bi-weekly basis to support this testing, along with the broader supply of tests geared towards symptomatic use.

We acknowledge the important work that you are already doing to help keep schools open and to keep our students and children as safe as possible.

Thank you once again for your continued partnership in implementing local testing initiatives this school year.

Sincerely,

Julia Danos  
Executive Lead, Reopening Secretariat  
Ministry of Education

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## Appendix 1 – De-Kitting Instructions

### Equipment, Supplies Provided and De-Kitting Instructions:

- The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services will be delivering rapid antigen tests to school boards beginning this week and school boards will receive one of three test kits:
  - BTNX – 25 pack or 5 pack
  - BioSensor – 25 pack
  - FaStep – 20 pack
- Supplies contained in the boxes of tests include:
  - testing cartridge
  - swabs
  - depending on test type, either: test tubes + dispenser tip + pre-portioned ampules of buffer solution **OR** pre-filled test tube with buffer solution
- Schools boards/schools/child care centres will be required to de-kit the boxes in order to distribute 2 tests per individual in alignment with the testing guidance.
- To make the mini kits with enough supplies for conducting two tests, please follow these instructions:
  1. If available, boards/schools/child care centres may wish to conduct the positive and negative control swabs on each new lot or shipment of rapid antigen tests for quality assurance purposes, however this step is **not required**.
  2. Collect two of all the necessary supplies for each kit, including:
    1. Two (2) foil wrapped test cartridges
    2. Two (2) packaged swabs
    3. Depending on test type, either:
      - a. Two (2) prefilled test tubes with buffer solution **OR**
      - b. Two (2) test tubes + two (2) dispenser tips + two (2) pre-portioned ampules of buffer solution
  3. Put supplies into a small bag or another type of container.
    1. Information letter to school communities should be distributed with the kits but does not need to be included in the small bag (template will be provided shortly via regional offices).