

Consent for COVID-19 Pooled Testing, Newburyport High School

March 1, 2021

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for your continued partnership during this unprecedented school year. In an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we have been working closely with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) to implement a **free COVID-19 pooled testing program for students and staff at our school.**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information and to ask your permission to regularly test your child in the pooled testing program.

What is COVID-19 Pooled Testing? Pooled testing involves mixing several individuals' test samples together into one "pool" and then testing the pooled sample for COVID-19. This approach increases the number of individuals that can be tested at one time and allows us to regularly test our school community for COVID-19.

How is Pool Testing Implemented? Pooled tests are performed at least once a week for all participating students and staff. It is a quick test using a shallow nasal swab. Our school nurses receive the pool results within 24-48 hours. If the result of the pool is negative, then all individuals are presumed to not have COVID-19. If the result of the pool is positive, then all individuals in the pool must be retested individually.

Because pooled testing does not give individual results, you are only notified if your child requires follow-up testing. NPS is using the Abbott BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test for follow-up testing. Students or staff in a positive pool are tested as soon as possible and receive individual results in 15 minutes. If the BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test does not reveal the positive pool member, individual PCR testing is available to all pool participants.

How to Participate. We will need a consent form for each student before we can test. To complete the consent form, **you will create an account on *Project Beacon*** (a non-profit organization contracted by the state to compile consent for testing and to report test results to schools). The *Project Beacon* consent is a confidential, HIPAA compliant form that authorizes the school to include your child in our weekly pool tests and any necessary individual diagnostic follow up tests (in the event a pool is positive). The consent forms are school specific. Please make sure to access the correct form for your child's school.

To register for the Newburyport High School Testing Program use this school specific link:
[Join NPS on Project Beacon for COVID-19 testing](#)

Once on *Project Beacon* you will need to create an account for your child. Please make sure to check off "secondary profile," as you are the parent/guardian. You will only need to register

your child once. Please respond to any email you receive from *Project Beacon*. **A paper consent form may be requested if you cannot access the online site. Please contact your school nurse.**

How have NPS Staff been Trained? Our nursing team has been thoroughly trained on how to administer pooled testing and the Abbott BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test.

We are grateful to our committed staff and families who continue to show great flexibility and resilience as we navigate through this school year. We are excited to add pooled testing as another mitigation strategy for our school community, as we continue to work together toward the safe return of all students and staff to school.

For more details on the testing process, please see the [NPS Pool Testing Site](#). If you have questions, or if you would prefer a paper permission form, please reach out to our nursing team: Angela Casella (acasella@newburyport.k12.ma.us) or Cathy Riccio (criccio@newburyport.k12.ma.us).

Thank you,

Andy Wulf
Principal, Newburyport High School

Angela Casella and Susan Anderson
School Nurses, Newburyport High School

Cathy Riccio
Director of Health and Safety, Newburyport Public Schools