

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is providing funding through the American Rescue Plan Act to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) support COVID-19 screening/testing in K-12 schools (public and private/charter). The [ELC Reopening Schools Grant](#) is intended to support the reopening and in-person instruction of K-12 schools through supporting comprehensive COVID screening/testing for K-12 schools.

The Montana DPHHS will develop and disseminate a comprehensive screening/testing plan to support SARS-CoV-2 screening testing for the 2021-22 school year based on the experiences of Montana and other states, perspectives of school personnel and local health departments, and CDC guidance to craft strategies for using federal resources beginning in the fall. The objective is to reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission in schools and in communities by identifying potentially infected individuals quickly and implementing mitigation measures to prevent further spread.

Eligibility: All K-12 schools (public and private) in Montana are eligible to participate in this program. School-affiliated summer programs, including camps and summer instruction, are also eligible.

Timeline: Screening/testing programs in schools may begin with summer activities and extend through the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

Available Funding/Allowable Uses

\$32,191,069 has been allocated to the Montana DPHHS to support this effort. A minimum of 85% of the award must directly support school districts. Funds can be used to hire/contract temporary personnel to support this effort, purchase supplies (e.g., test kits, collection supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE)), and other materials needed to implement this effort.

COVID-19 Screening/Testing Models that School May Consider Implementing

Non-Participation (no financial support)

- Schools continue their regular practices by referring persons to their provider or other local testing site.

Screening Testing

- Offer screening testing on-site, to identify occurrence at the individual level even if there is no reason to suspect infection. These are persons who have no symptoms and no known exposure to COVID-19.

Comprehensive Testing Program

- Offer both screening and diagnostic testing on site for either staff and/or students, as feasible.

Note: On-site can be administered by designated school staff or third-party partner. Some options are:

- Perform rapid antigen tests for instant results or collect PCR tests and send off for analysis

Depending on the option selected, reporting may be done by school staff/ third party or exclusively third party, providing various levels of involvement by school staff.

What DPHHS and Partners Will Provide

- Funding to school districts for staffing and other allowable expenses
- SARS-CoV-2 antigen rapid test kits, PPE, and specimen collection materials
- Technical support and coordination
- Training and guidance to implement testing protocols

What's Happening Now and What to Expect

DPHHS will work with education partners over the coming weeks to conduct an assessment to determine needs and overall interest among school districts. DPHHS is in the process of developing various screening testing models and protocols which will be shared with schools in advance of the 2021-2022 school year. The Department will be hiring a full time School Health Coordinator, who will serve as resource and liaison to school districts related to this funding opportunity. School districts interested in receiving these funds will be asked to complete and submit a brief application to receive funding.