



COVID-19

Operation Expanded Testing

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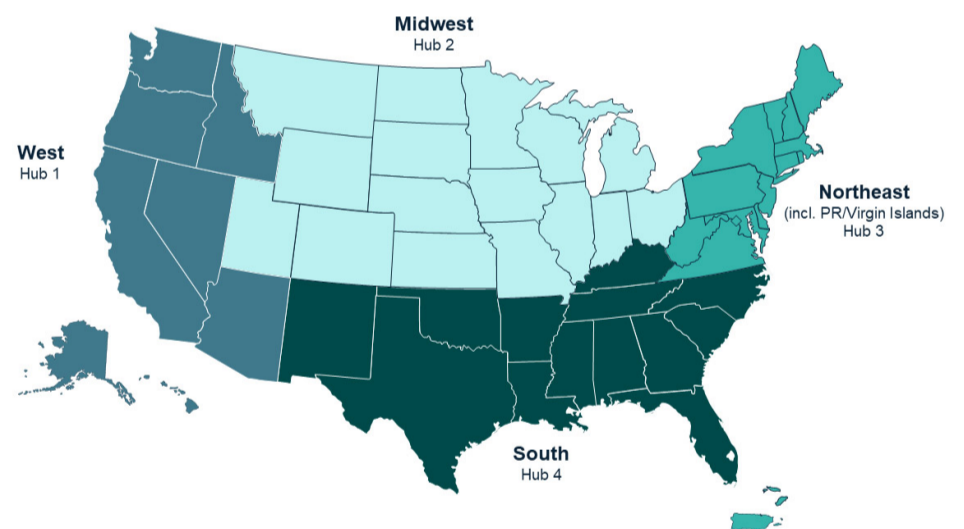
In addition to COVID-19 vaccination, physical distancing, and masking, testing is a safe and effective way to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Expanded testing helps to create a safe learning environment for children in U.S. schools and decreases the risk of disease transmission in congregate settings.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Operation Expanded Testing (OpET) program increases access to testing nationwide, especially for communities that have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. OpET provides no-cost testing to child care centers, K-12 schools, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), under-resourced communities, and congregate settings, such as homeless shelters, domestic violence and abuse shelters, non-federal correctional facilities, and other qualified sites. OpET can perform millions of tests through July 1, 2022. These contractor-provided laboratory services include specimen collection supplies, shipping materials, laboratory testing, and results reporting. The recipient sites contribute staff to collect specimens.

Enroll Your Facility into Operation Expanded Testing Today

To enroll your facility into OpET's no-cost [screening testing](#) program, follow these steps.

1. **Identify** your facility's region and coordination hub.
2. **Visit** your regional coordination hub's website.
 1. [Hub 1 - West](#)
 2. [Hub 2 - Midwest](#)
 3. [Hubs 3 & 4 - Northeast & South](#)
3. **Enroll** your school, child care center, shelter, or other congregate setting.



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Questions

How long is this resource available to the public?

The program is active through July 1, 2022.

Who can participate in the program?

OpET supports no-cost school-based testing for K-12 students and congregate settings in communities that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The program is available to child care centers, K-12 schools, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and congregate settings, such as homeless shelters, domestic violence and abuse

shelters, non-federal correctional facilities, and other qualified sites. Contact your regional coordination hub to see if your school or congregate setting qualifies.

What is the cost to participate?

Testing under OpET is no-cost to facilities. OpET is responsible for sample collection supplies, shipping materials, laboratory testing and results reporting. To participate, facilities need to work with their regional coordination hub to enroll, complete training, and provide staff to collect the specimens.

Can private schools participate in the program?

Yes, private schools may enroll in the program.

How is the testing funded?

In May 2021, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in collaboration with the Department of Defense (DoD) created the \$650 million program, OpET, to expand national COVID-19 testing capacity for children and communities in need of testing.

Who collects samples at the site?

The organization or site manages specimen collection and provides staff to do it at the site. For example, a school would make a collection schedule and collect specimens from students. The school would then submit the specimens to the regional hub's laboratory where the specimens are tested. If the facility cannot provide staffing, the regional coordination hub may coordinate staff at a cost to the facility.

Regional Coordination Hubs

Hub 1 – West – <https://letsendthistogether.com> 

Hub 2 – Midwest – www.testedandprotected.org 

Hubs 3 & 4 – Northeast & South – <https://operationexpandedtesting.com> 

CDC has awarded nearly \$30 billion through the [Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity \(ELC\)](#) cooperative agreement in support of COVID-19 testing and prevention efforts in communities, as well as among high-risk settings, such as correctional facilities and for people experiencing homelessness. In addition, CDC awarded \$10 billion through the (ELC) [Reopening Schools Award](#), which supports COVID-19 screening testing and other prevention activities to reopen and keep schools open safely for in-person instruction. If your jurisdiction received funding under one of these mechanisms, the funds may be used for the costs associated with setting up a site and specimen collection operations necessary for participation in the OpET testing program.

How are Samples Submitted for Testing?

Facility staff collect the specimens and are given shipping and handling instructions by the regional coordination hub, which covers shipping.

What type of COVID-19 tests are used in the program?

OpET regional coordination hubs primarily provide laboratory-based [nucleic acid amplification tests](#) (NAATs) that use nasal swab collection kits. Saliva sample collection is available in the Midwest region through Battelle. Eurofins (Northeast and South regions) and Battelle (Midwest) offer [pooled](#) NAAT testing. Pools testing positive will be automatically retested using individual specimens to determine individual positives.

What is pooled testing?

[Pooling samples](#) is a testing method where a predetermined number of specimens are combined and used in one test. Pooled sample testing increases testing capacity and allows for higher volume screening. If a pool is negative, results are reported as negative for all individuals in that pool. If a pool is positive, the individual specimens from the positive pool are automatically routed for individual testing to determine which samples are positive. Both the positive and negative individual results are then reported. The regional coordination hub will work with your site to develop a testing plan that covers detailed information about pooled testing, as needed. See [Interim Guidance for Use of Pooling Procedures in SARS-CoV-2 Diagnostic and Screening Testing](#) for more information.

What is the turnaround time for results?

Each test result is reported to the facility within 72 hours after the specimen is collected.
