

George Latimer
County Executive

Department of Health

Sherlita Amler, M.D.
Commissioner

October 23, 2020

Dear School Administrators, School Physicians, and School Health Staff:

I am writing to update and clarify **COVID-19 Point of Care (POC) molecular testing** availability and guidance and to strongly urge that school physicians be consulted and provide input regarding these testing and laboratory issues.

There are currently at least two **COVID-19 POC molecular** tests (those that detect the genetic material - RNA or DNA) that are FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) approved and in use by health care providers in Westchester County:

- Cepheid Xpert Xpress
- Abbott ID NOW

Both of these tests can be done on site in a provider's office and can give test results within 15 – 40 minutes, often by the time a patient leaves the office – these are referred to as Point of Care (POC) tests.

➤ The **Cepheid Xpert Xpress COVID-19 test** is identical to the molecular test that must be sent to and performed at hospital, commercial, or other laboratories. This same test has recently been approved to be performed on site in provider offices and other non-traditional laboratory settings. **No additional testing or results are recommended or indicated for Cepheid Xpert Xpress test results – either positive or negative.**

➤ In contrast the below previously issued guidance applies to the **Abbott ID NOW COVID-19 POC molecular test and all COVID-19 Antigen tests:**

As per NYSDOH guidance, retesting after an initial positive nasal swab test is not recommended, but **any symptomatic individual with a negative result from a POC COVID-19 Antigen or the POC Abbott ID NOW molecular test should be confirmed by a follow up conventional COVID-19 RT-PCR test.**

POC COVID-19 Antigen and Abbott ID NOW tests are of limited benefit and generally not recommended for **asymptomatic persons who have been exposed to a COVID-19 lab positive individuals because these individuals must quarantine or be excluded from school for a minimum of 14 days REGARDLESS of their test results,** following their most recent exposure to the lab positive individual.

➤ Current NYSDOH guidance requires **that individuals who test positive for COVID-19 by any COVID-19 Antigen or molecular test (regardless of a simultaneous negative test result) to be considered potentially infectious and thus subject to isolation and contact tracing.**

School Physicians and Health staff may contact one of the department's Infectious Diseases Physicians at 914-813-5180 for additional information.

I ask that you please share this important information with your school community and direct them to the Health Department's website www.westchestergov.com/health for the most current information about COVID-19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherlita Amler MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue ink color.

Sherlita Amler, MD