

FAQs

What is Community Labs?

[Community Labs](#) is a local nonprofit organization that is creating a safe pathway for schools and businesses to reopen safely allowing for in-person learning, for people to return to work, and communities to thrive. This innovative, nonprofit laboratory is changing how traditional COVID-19 testing is currently conducted with **24-hour turnaround, 95% accuracy, and is less invasive by swabbing** in the front of the nostril.

Is this process safe?

This screening process was created by the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard and, in partnership with UT Health San Antonio and the staff at BioBridge, the process is being replicated in San Antonio for use. The Community Labs screening process uses a PCR test—the FDA gold standard in COVID-19 testing—uses a less-invasive method, and is **95% effective in detecting asymptomatic silent spreaders** of the virus.

Has anyone else done this kind of screening?

We are the first school district in San Antonio and Bexar County to implement this process. Previously it was used in other businesses in San Antonio.

How much does this cost?

The test would normally cost \$35 per test. However, the tests are free to all students and staff thanks to a generous grant from a fund created by local philanthropists.

Our kids have been out of school a long time. Why are we just starting this now?

We know every day we are not in a classroom with our students is one more challenge they are facing when it comes to their education. Until now, testing has only been available large-scale for those who are showing symptoms of the COVID-19 virus. The Community Labs process specifically screens for those people who look and feel healthy, but may actually be asymptomatic spreaders of the COVID-19 virus.

Will my results stay private?

All test results are private. Only you and your school's Health Services Department will know the results of the test.

What makes this screening process different?

Community Labs is a nonprofit laboratory that is changing how traditional COVID-19 testing is currently conducted with 24-hour turnaround, the ability to screen thousands at a time, have 95% accuracy, and is less invasive by swabbing in the front of the nostril.

Community Labs will perform weekly COVID-19 screening to find the asymptomatic carriers; those who test positive for COVID-19, but have no symptoms. When we identify and quarantine

those asymptomatic carriers, we know the remaining students and staff are COVID-19-free and healthy. With this program from Community Labs, we can create COVID-19 Safety Zones on each campus, allowing students and teachers the confidence to go back to teaching and learning safely.

How will this process work?

Unlike other COVID-19 tests you may have seen, a swab of the inside front of the nostril-- not deep in the nasal cavity-- is all that is needed. [Here is a video that shows the test being administered.](#) The test will be performed on your campus on a set day of the week and time for both students and staff.

Within 24-hours or less, you will be contacted by the school with your results.

Those who are asymptomatic will be required to quarantine at home. Those who are not, can return to the classroom with other students who have experienced the same test.

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Do I have to sign a release form?

Yes. Please sign the consent form allowing for weekly tests from Community Lab.

What if I refuse to be screened?

All athletes will be required to test/screen in order to participate in athletics and games. Parents/guardians of all other students are not required to complete consents for screening but are highly encouraged to provide consent in order to help maintain the health and safety of all students and staff.

What happens if I test positive? When can I come back to work/school?

If a person tests positive, they will be contacted by School Health Services Department staff. For students, parents/guardians will be contacted. The person will be instructed to isolate at home and consult their medical provider. The positive person will not be allowed to enter district facilities until medical clearance or Return to School/Work criteria has been met. School Health Services personnel will provide Return to School/Work criteria.

Will I be notified if my child was exposed to someone who tests positive?

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) requires districts to provide notification to staff, students, and parents when a positive case is identified at a campus. Notifications will be sent upon identification of such cases. The district will contact any additionally identified potential exposures based on TEA's guideline and definition for exposure.

Are the tests we are using FDA approved?

In national emergencies, the FDA is legally authorized to work with FDA-approved labs to create tests for emergency use. These labs go through a strenuous process for safety, validity of tests, and outcomes. BioBridge in San Antonio is one of those labs. Through this partnership with Community Labs, BioBride is using a PCR test - the gold standard of FDA COVID-19 testing- because of its 95% accuracy rate. The COVID-19 testing used by BioBridge and Community Labs is authorized by the FDA for emergency use.

How safe are the supplies that will be used?

The supplies that are being used to collect samples for testing are FDA approved and are readily available through our testing partner, BioBridge. Since the supplies are available, sometimes called “off-the-shelf” supplies, it keeps the cost low, but does not affect the quality of the test. For example, the swab that collects the sample from the front part of the nostril is about the same size as a Q-tip. This swab is used for many different lab tests, including the Community Lab COVID-19 test that will be used at schools.

Why is the school using a test that isn't FDA approved?

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Is the test the Community Labs using a new test?

The test that will be used by Community Labs is not a new test developed here. It is a Thermo Fisher Scientific test that first received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the FDA in March, and has been in consistent use since then. It was one of the first COVID-19 tests to be authorized for use under an EUA. As of yet, no tests for COVID-19 have been approved by the FDA — all tests in use in the US fall under FDA Emergency Use Authorization status.

The Thermo Fisher Scientific test is not being modified or altered for use by Community Labs. What IS innovative is how the test will be used to test asymptomatic populations to prevent the spread of the virus. Currently most COVID-19 testing in San Antonio is available only to patients who have symptoms. In addition, we have worked to solve several supply chain issues to help lower the cost of the test and to ensure it can be made more widely available. In many cases, shortages of testing reagents and supplies have limited availability of testing and kept costs high.