



August 20, 2020

University of Wisconsin System COVID-19 Testing Protocols

As the University of Wisconsin System welcomes back students to our campuses, **our testing plan, including protocols to diagnose COVID-19**, is one component of a comprehensive strategy to be used in conjunction with promoting behaviors to reduce spread, maintaining healthy environments, and preparing for when someone gets sick.

We are rolling out a COVID-19 testing regimen that will stand as one of the most robust university systemwide testing plans in the country. Thanks to an allocation of about \$32 million from the office of Gov. Tony Evers and originally delivered from the federal CARES Act, our plan includes nearly \$18 million for testing more than 350,000 students and \$6 million for personal protective equipment associated with that testing.

Amid the pandemic, there is no way to eliminate all risk and there is no way to know when it will end. However, we know educating our students on campus is the best choice for their emotional well-being and educational progress. The personal cost of not providing an educational experience students seek is significant.

The plan described here applies to all UW System universities except UW-Madison, which has its own testing plan with \$8 million allocated by the governor's office.

This System funding will allow for the testing of up to 34,000 students who show COVID-19 symptoms, similar to tests now being administered in medical and community settings. Approximately 28,000 PCR tests will be distributed to universities and about 6,000 held in reserve by UW System for future allocation.

The funding we have received will also provide for an additional 317,000 tests for students living in residence halls with a **rapid turnaround of results**.

As part of our testing protocol, we are using **Quidel antigen** analyzers, a point-of-care test that will allow us to do surveillance and screening with the levels of frequency and scope to identify early outbreaks. The machines are arriving this week with training to begin on campuses next week.

The ability to quickly identify individuals who are asymptomatic yet shedding the virus is the key to preventing or controlling the spread of the virus. That is why these antigen testing machines are vital to our efforts. The same analyzers can be used to perform the flu test, allowing for individuals to distinguish if one's symptoms are connected to the flu.

Providing the test more frequently and getting results within an hour will help campuses quickly detect an “early spreader” prior to the expression of symptoms, particularly in settings such as residence halls and other “close contact” congregate situations. These tests allow for quick detection.

Campuses within the UW System are preparing **screening** and **surveillance** testing for early identification and to detect transmission hot spots using antigen “point-of-care” tests.

The UW System will have a **case dashboard** by the beginning of fall semester for public reporting of cases within the System.

The UW System plan also includes money for **staffing** to assist universities with testing, as well as a mobile unit to address unanticipated needs at a particular campus.

The funding we’ve received will also help us equip campuses with necessary **personal protective equipment**, such as hand sanitizers, cleaning supplies, and face masks.

Our universities are also working closely with local public health departments to monitor trends in their communities and to discuss **contact tracing**. We are also monitoring guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Food and Drug Administration.

We are making aggressive and careful plans for what to do if case numbers start to rise. We know success will be dependent on responsible student behavior and timely response to infections.

Our intensive planning protocols include strategies to use comprehensive testing to identify potential areas of risk as soon as possible – and then take swift action in response. Taken together, our abundant antigen tests coupled with our protocols on isolation and quarantine are in place to address outbreaks.

Each campus has plans for how these students will be monitored, receive treatment if necessary, get meals, and continue their education.

We have spent all summer planning for this fall in a way that mitigates risk for our faculty, staff, students and university communities, believing that a UW education is the best way to improve lives and communities.