



Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES

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News

For Immediate Release

A Statement Regarding COVID Testing

December 29, 2021 (New Hartford, N.Y.) – Recently, local, New York state and Federal governments have created policies to support schools in their efforts to educate students in-person during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The component school districts of the Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES are appreciative that our local, State and Federal officials have listened to our feedback regarding these policies and have responded by implementing changes that will allow our schools to continue in-person learning.

Earlier this week, Governor Hochul announced that New York state will distribute approximately 3 million test kits to schools this week. New York state is requesting that schools distribute tests directly to families so that they may test their children at home in order to determine if their child has COVID and to keep their child out of school should they be positive. School districts anticipate having these tests between Dec. 30-Jan. 3. Each district will communicate with families regarding the availability and distribution of these tests for their children.

While it is encouraging that NYS has been able to secure an initial supply of tests, having an adequate and frequent supply of COVID tests for schools remains a challenge throughout the State and the nation. Locally, the Oneida County Department of Public Health has allowed for schools to work with them toward implementing test-to-stay programming, which allows asymptomatic students who have been exposed to COVID at school to continue attending as long as they can be regularly tested for COVID during the traditional quarantine period. Unfortunately, inadequate testing supplies hamper schools' abilities to implement this approach, which has been the case among the Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES component school districts.

Recently, Governor Hochul announced reduced quarantine periods for fully vaccinated essential workers. At this time, schools are waiting for further guidance regarding this announcement and how it pertains to school personnel and the workplace.

Schools across our region remain concerned about holiday-related COVID surges, along with the transmission of the highly infectious Omicron variant. The ability for schools to maintain an in-person workforce in order to provide instruction and appropriate supervision of students is a priority and having a regular and adequate supply of COVID tests is essential.

The Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES and its component school districts appreciate changes to health care policy and the work that local, state and federal governments continue to do on behalf of children and schools across the State. We remain hopeful that a regular and adequate supply of tests will be established and provided to schools so that schools can remain open.

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The Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES serves the following school districts: Brookfield, Clinton, Holland Patent, New Hartford, New York Mills, Oriskany, Remsen, Sauquoit Valley, Utica, Waterville, Westmoreland and Whitesboro.

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