



MEMORANDUM

Jess Dannhauser
Commissioner

**Angel V. Mendoza, Jr.,
MD**
Chief Medical Officer
Office of Child and Family
Health

Julie Farber
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Family
Permanency Services

150 William Street
New York, NY 10038

Date: January 6, 2022

To: Foster Care Providers

From: Dr. Angel Mendoza, Agency Chief Medical Officer; Julie Farber, Deputy Commissioner Family Permanency Services

Re: Guidance on pre-admission COVID-19 testing

This guidance updates the guidance issued on December 14, 2021. New substantive language is highlighted below in **yellow**.

Currently, there is high COVID-19 transmission in New York City. With the winter months upon us and the ongoing surge of the Omicron variant, it is increasingly important for staff, families, and children to stay vigilant, practice prevention measures, including isolation after a positive test, and receive vaccinations and boosters as soon as they are eligible. At the same time, ACS and provider agencies are committed to making every effort to ensure children and youth in our care are placed expeditiously. Towards these collective goals, ACS is providing the following guidance for providers regarding COVID-19 testing prior to placement acceptance.

Pre-Admission Testing:

In consultation with City health authorities, ACS will continue to conduct COVID-19 screening for symptoms and/or exposure, of all children/youth during the pre-admission process or following a return from absence. If the screening is positive, the child/youth will be tested immediately and remain at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center (NSCC), pending test results.

If the screening result is negative, then testing must happen **ONLY** for the following categories of children/youth:

- a. Children/youth who will be placed in congregate care settings
- b. Children/youth who will be placed in Family Foster Care where a household member has underlying conditions which place them at high risk for COVID complications

Congregate facilities may conduct testing of referred youth and youth returning from absence.

Please note that the lack of recent test results is not an appropriate reason for a provider agency to delay placement of a referred child, or to reject a referral. While children and youth may be tested prior to placement, the child/youth can be immediately placed at the congregate care setting or family foster care placement pending test results.

Precautions while waiting for test results OR for youth who refuse testing:

While waiting for test results, the child/youth should be closely monitored for any emerging COVID-like symptoms for a period of 48 hours and all sites should observe the following prevention measures:

- Observe social distancing guidelines where practicable. Keep at least 6 feet from others if possible.
- Wear an appropriate face covering¹ when not eating, drinking, bathing, or sleeping.
- Keep hands clean. Wash hands and carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer when outside the home. Have the child/youth avoid touching their face with unwashed hands and cover coughs and sneezes.

These prevention and monitoring measures should also be observed if a youth refuses testing.

Children and Youth at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center (NSCC)

For children and youth at the NSCC, two (2) Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests will be conducted at two different time points:

- a) the first test will be conducted at Day 1-2 of admission,
- b) If the child/youth remains at the NSCC for 10 or more days, a second test will be conducted at Day 10.

If both tests are negative, then they would be considered "COVID-Free", unless they experience COVID-like symptoms or if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19. Requests for additional testing will not be granted unless the child/youth is symptomatic or newly exposed.

Children in Quarantine/Previously Exposed

For asymptomatic children awaiting placement at the NSCC, SARC or YRCs who have been exposed to COVID, they will remain for the duration of the required quarantine period. ACS is following State and City Health Department guidelines regarding the quarantine period, which is currently 5-14 days. Children may be placed in non-

¹ See NYC DOHMH COVID-19 FAQs About Masks. Available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/resources/facecoverings.page>

congregate foster care after 5 days of quarantine, provided they are asymptomatic. **Children coming out of quarantine will be tested prior to placement.**

Children Who Have Tested Positive

For children awaiting placement at the NSCC, SARC or YRCs who have tested positive, the child/youth will remain for the duration of the required isolation period. ACS is following State and City Health Department guidelines regarding the isolation period, which is currently 5-10 days or longer depending on symptomatology and resolution.

Children may be placed in family foster homes after 5 days of isolation, provided they are asymptomatic or if their symptoms are resolving.

For youth going to congregate care settings, the isolation period will be 10 days or more prior to placement, depending on symptomatology and resolution. Strict adherence to infection prevention measures should be implemented (see section on Precautions above).

Children coming out of isolation will not be re-tested prior to placement because present health guidelines do not recommend a test-based termination of isolation. This is because COVID-19 diagnostic tests can continue to show positive after the contagious period has ended. As such, residential foster care agencies are expected to accept placements after the isolation period has concluded without a re-test. Family foster care providers are expected to work with foster parents to educate them that health guidelines do not recommend re-testing, so that they are able to accept children.

Thank you for your commitment to the children and youth in our collective care, especially as we work together through the COVID-19 pandemic. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this update, please contact Katie Aquino at katherine.aquino@acs.nyc.gov.