



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

August 31, 2021

Superintendent's Message: COVID testing update

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Students,

I am happy to report that 85% of SMMUSD families have provided consent for weekly COVID-19 screening testing. If you have registered, we thank you for your compliance and in our efforts to keep students and staff safe and to provide a better opportunity to maintain the continuity of learning.

If you have not yet registered, we request that you do. District and site staff will follow up with families who have not yet registered or submitted an exemption. We are available to assist you with the process of registering or answering any questions or concerns. Our FAQ has answers to the most common questions. English: <https://bit.ly/CovidTestingFAQ>
Spanish: <https://bit.ly/CovidTestingFAQ-Span>
[To register, visit this chart and click on the link for your school site.](#)

If you choose to not register / consent to free convenient testing at your school, you have the following options:

1. Arrange for PCR testing off campus with your chosen provider or free testing location, such as pharmacies, county locations, etc. Note that this option is for families who have chosen not to provide the necessary insurance information or alternative information for our district to provide the weekly free testing service. Rapid tests, also known as antigen tests will not be accepted. Information will be provided regarding this requirement to participating families.
2. Exemptions: Submitted testing and masking exemption forms are currently under review. You will be notified by the Student Services Department of your exemption status this week.
3. Our independent study program will be offered to those families who chose not to participate in weekly testing on campus, or off site. However, each site will provide an opportunity for parents and students to receive an overview of the program in terms of curriculum and student activities / involvement as part of the process. Please see our previously published independent study FAQ: English: <https://bit.ly/FAQindStudy21-22>
Spanish: <https://bit.ly/FAQindStudy21-22Span>

Our district's weekly testing started last Wednesday and will continue this week for families who have consented. Principals have reported that the first experience with testing went smoothly, and schools learned a lot about how to make the process more efficient.

Staff will contact our non-registered families by September 3. After September 3, parents who have not yet registered, not agreed to provide weekly PCR tests or have had an exemption denied, will not be allowed on campus for in-person instruction or activities, starting Sept 8, 2021. Independent study, as described above, will be provided and fulfills our responsibility to provide a free appropriate public education for all students.

We have learned that some parents are submitting FERPA opt out forms. Below are the links to the Annual Parent Notification, provided to parents by school sites every year. We call your attention to pages 18 and 19 that describe information about student release of information. The school is responsible for keeping student records. Parents and guardians have absolute access to records unless prohibited by court order. With the exception of directory-type information, the law limits access to information in student records **without parental consent to, generally:** school and district personnel with legitimate education interest; a school to which a student is transferring, in which case the parent is notified by the school district requesting the record or transfer of information; specified federal and state education administrators; prospective grantors of students financial aid; **state and local agencies concerned with the health and safety of students in cases of emergency, immunization programs and programs for the control of communicable disease.**

In other words, SMMUSD is fulfilling the FERPA law. Please note again, that if you do not want to submit your insurance information, we are accepting weekly PCR results from your own provider in lieu of our free service. Also note that the district will not cover any expense incurred by utilizing outside providers. English: <https://www.smmusd.org/Handbook>
Spanish: <https://www.smmusd.org/HandbookSP>

Our dedicated COVID-19 webpage has links to prior letters, our FAQ, Covid reporting dashboard, safety plans and additional related information: www.smmusd.org/Coronavirus.

We are determined to maintain in-person instruction this year with as little disruption as possible. We can accomplish this goal together with our weekly testing for students and staff and vaccinations for everyone 12 and older. Please register today and let's do this together.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent