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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND CDPH ANNOUNCE ENHANCED COMMUNITY-BASED TESTING PLAN IN RESPONSE TO SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES

\$14 million in grants awarded to support testing and contact tracing at community health centers; new testing site to open at Midway Airport

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced an enhancement of the City's community-based testing program and long-term citywide testing strategy in response to the second surge of COVID-19. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the City has taken a comprehensive, community-based approach that directs testing resources to the neighborhoods most impacted by the pandemic. In response to recent surge in COVID-19 cases and the onset of cold temperatures, the City is enhancing its testing strategy by creating a new permanent testing site at Midway Airport, directing \$14 million in grants and other resources to various healthcare and community partners to expand testing and contact tracing in clinical and community settings, and implementing a winterization plan to ensure testing remains viable throughout the winter.

"Chicago is setting new testing records every day and it is our highest priority to ensure that testing remains equitably accessible and available to Chicago's most vulnerable residents," said Mayor Lightfoot. "We will continue to work with partners and direct resources to the communities who have been hit the hardest by this pandemic."

COVID-19 testing in Chicago has significantly increased over the past few weeks, reaching a 7-day rolling average of 16,259 daily tests as of November 17. This includes tests performed at CDPH testing centers and those from other providers, including clinical providers, Federally Qualified Health Centers and pharmacies. The City continues to encourage residents that want a test to first contact their primary care provider if they have one, since they are best served when tested by someone familiar with their medical history that can provide counseling that helps them understand exactly what their test result means for their health.

CDPH's community-based testing sites were established to supplement testing by clinical providers and ensure that all Chicagoans have access to tests at no cost, regardless of their immigration status or ability to pay. CDPH's testing program is currently administering an



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average of over 3,500 tests per day and provides about 15% of COVID-19 testing across the entire City. In total as of November 17, the City-run community-based testing program has visited over 97 different locations and performed 252,710 tests, with a focus on communities hardest hit by COVID-19 based on case rates, and in partnership with community-based organizations. Among those tested at CDPH's community-based testing sites, 63% are Black or Latinx from the Northwest, West and Southwest areas of the city with high COVID-19 case rates.

“The best way to get tested is by calling your health care provider, but there are many other convenient and affordable ways to get tested in Chicago, including new at-home testing services,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, MD, MPH. “Additionally, we have partnered with community health centers to ensure that people, regardless of ability to pay, insurance or immigration status, have access to both testing and primary care.”

In order to expand testing in critical areas, the City has awarded \$14 million in grants to help community health centers expand testing and contact tracing capabilities. These Foundation Epidemiology Laboratory and Capacity grants, funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will provide materials, supplies, equipment and technical assistance to the recipients. CDPH has also deployed over 40,000 rapid antigen tests (BinaxNow) to community health centers that will be used to add rapid viral testing capacity. Additionally, CDPH is working with the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership and City Colleges of Chicago to identify opportunities to provide staffing support to these organizations and help them identify suitable community testing site locations.

“The City’s partnership has been vital as we work to enhance our testing capacity in neighborhoods most impacted by the pandemic,” said Daniel Fulwiler, President and CEO, Esperanza Health Centers. “The coming winter weather and surge of new cases is forcing health centers to adapt, innovate, hire more staff and find new locations where we can reach and test a higher volume of people in need.”

CDPH also announced changes to the City’s community-based testing program, including plans to open a fourth testing site at Midway Airport. This site will be operational on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12pm to 6pm, and on Saturdays from 10am to 4pm. Additionally, one of the current testing sites will move to a new location in close proximity and in the same zip code. The testing site currently located at Dr. Jorge Prieto Math and Science Academy will be relocated to Charles A. Prosser Career Academy, keeping current hours of operation. All static sites will be provide both drive through and walk up services.



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The changes will take effect on Monday, November 23. The new locations and hours of operation will be as follows:

Charles A. Prosser Career Academy
2148 N Long Ave, Chicago, IL 60639
Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm

Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy
2850 W 24th Blvd, Chicago, IL 60623
Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm

Midway Airport, Parking Lot B
5738 W 55th St, Chicago, IL 60638
Tuesday & Thursday, 12pm-6pm
Saturday, 10am-4pm

Gately Park
744 E 103rd St, Chicago, IL 60628
Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10am-4pm

Additional mobile testing units will continue to be deployed every week to areas with high incidence of COVID-19. In response to community feedback, CDPH is working to rotate these sites in more consistent locations, to increase predictability for those communities.

“Expanding access to COVID-19 testing is critical in our fight against the pandemic,” said Roderick Sawyer, 6th Ward Alderman and Chairman of the Health and Human Relations Committee. “The City’s enhanced community-based testing plan and ongoing support for community and health organizations are key to achieving equity and ensuring options that are accessible for all Chicagoans.”

As the City prepares for the winter, CDPH has partnered with Curative to implement its winterization plan for testing sites. Curative, a testing company that has worked with the City since May to provide PCR testing at all community-based testing sites, is providing vans for mobile testing, trailers to maintain drive through testing operations and kiosks to maintain walk up operations. This will allow the City to continue providing critical community testing where it is needed most as the temperature drops.

“Curative is proud to be partnering with the City of Chicago as a crucial COVID-19 testing resource for residents during this pivotal moment in the pandemic,” said Fred Turner, CEO and co-founder of Curative. “Curative’s goal is to make testing more accessible to all, including those most vulnerable, with our easy walk-up kiosks and vans available across the city. Our unique, self-collected oral fluid swab COVID-19 test offers a painless, simple option with quick 24-48-hour results and no cost to patients.”

As a reminder, residents who do not have a health provider or medical insurance can use the City of Chicago’s [interactive testing map](#) to find a testing site. The map also includes community health centers, where residents can access testing and primary care services, regardless of ability to pay or immigration status.



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Testing is currently recommended for:

- people who have symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever or chills, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, muscle or body aches, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea;
- people who have been in contact with someone who is ill, especially if it's someone they live with, a friend or a coworker; and
- people who have recently participated in a high-risk activity, such as attending a large gathering or crowded space.

Recently, several private companies have started to offer at-home tests, sending testing kits directly to people's home so they can avoid having to visit a healthcare provider or testing site. These self-collected, at-home tests have been authorized by the FDA. Usually, people would need to fill out a screening questionnaire and – if they are eligible – they will receive a kit with instructions on how to collect and return their sample. Some companies also offer a telehealth consultation and results are usually available 1-3 days later. To see all available options, visit chi.gov/covidtesting.

Testing, while vitally important to the City's COVID-19 response, is only one part of a comprehensive strategy to control the spread of COVID-19. Even more crucial than detecting cases through testing is preventing cases in the first place. We encourage residents to protect themselves and their families by staying home as much as possible, avoiding all non-essential travel, and not inviting guests into their homes. Everyone should continue taking every day preventative actions such as keeping six feet distance from others, always wearing a face covering, frequent hand washing and staying home if they're sick.

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