



Health & Environment

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JCDHE announces saliva COVID-19 testing to be available soon

(JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS – Sept. 2, 2020) Today, the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment announced that in the next few weeks it will provide thousands of saliva tests to Johnson County K-12 public schools as a strategy to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Saliva testing was discussed during a livestreamed Shawnee Mission School District town hall that included Dr. Sanmi Areola, JCDHE director.

“We’re going to be able to test thousands of students and teachers and staff,” said Dr. Sanmi Areola. “This will be a very important tool for us, currently, especially in preventing infections in schools and preventing outbreaks. This test will be our preferred method for testing school students, teachers and staff.”

Preliminary plans include testing broadly to get a better picture of what is occurring in schools and the community in order to make informed public health decisions. The frequency of testing is yet to be determined. JCDHE expects to have access to several thousand tests, enough to do “on demand” testing and to monitor spread of the virus in students, teachers and staff.

On Thursday, Aug. 27, the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners authorized \$200,000 for an agreement with Clinical Reference Laboratory, Inc. (CRL) for COVID-19 testing supplies and processing services. On July 31, CRL announced Emergency Use Authorization from the Federal Drug Administration for a COVID-19 diagnostic test that utilizes the saliva from individuals.

Saliva tests are easy to administer and offer the opportunity for individuals to self-submit samples from their homes. JCDHE is still working with school district nurse coordinators as well as CRL on the logistics of how to deploy the tests and plan to make them available to schools in the coming weeks.

“I want to thank Johnson County for this COVID-19 testing tool,” said Shawnee Mission School District Superintendent Dr. Mike Fulton during the town hall event. “Without a robust testing strategy, it will be extremely difficult for us to make the kinds of decisions we need to make and allow us to be a partner in stopping the transmission of COVID-10 in our schools and our community.”

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