

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

*On August 23, 2021, Governor Murphy announced that all state employees – including all NJ TRANSIT employees – will be required to show proof of vaccination against the virus that causes COVID-19 by October 18, 2021, or to undergo regular testing for COVID-19. Mandatory weekly testing for those who have not provided proof of being fully vaccinated will begin on November 15.*

**Why are unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees required to be tested?** Screening testing is intended to identify infected people who are asymptomatic and do not have known, suspected, or reported exposure to COVID-19. Routine screening testing for COVID-19 is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify cases of COVID-19 early to prevent further transmission and is an effective strategy in the workplace when layered with other measures like symptom screening, masking, and social distancing.

### **Are fully vaccinated employees required to be tested each week?**

Employees who are fully vaccinated are not required to be tested each week at this time. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends that fully vaccinated individuals do not need to routinely participate in screening testing.

### **What constitutes full COVID-19 vaccination?**

Employees will be considered fully vaccinated if they have completed a full series of doses per manufacturer guidance. The Governor's Office recognizes only those COVID-19 vaccines approved by the Food and Drug Administration ("FDA") for Emergency Use in the United States. These include:

1. Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine
2. Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine
3. Janssen (aka J&J) COVID-19 Vaccine

### **Is proof of antibodies a substitute for proof of COVID-19 vaccination?**

No. Employees without proof of full COVID-19 vaccination must submit to a minimum of once weekly COVID-19 testing.

### **Does a recent COVID-19 diagnosis exempt an employee from required testing?**

Unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees who provide documentation from a licensed medical provider of a COVID-19 diagnosis within the last 90 days may be temporarily exempt from required testing for 90 days following the diagnosis.

**Is this testing available for employees experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or who have been exposed?** No. Testing administered by NJ TRANSIT is intended for employees who have not provided proof that they are fully vaccinated and are not currently experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. If an employee suspects that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches, loss of sense of smell or taste, or stomach upset), they should reach out to the NJ TRANSIT COVID-19 Hotline, per current agency protocols outlined in Policy [3.36a](#).

**What happens if an employee tests positive?**

If an employee test result is positive, they will receive an email notification with instructions to isolate (remain home), monitor their symptoms, and follow existing protocols for isolation. NJ TRANSIT employees are then responsible for reporting these results to the NJ TRANSIT COVID-19 Hotline and to their supervisor as outlined in existing reporting procedures.

If an asymptomatic, unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee participates in screening testing and their result is positive but the employee provides documentation from a medical provider to NJ TRANSIT Medical of a COVID-19 diagnosis within the previous 90 days and has completed appropriate isolation, the employee does not need to isolate from the workplace.

**If an employee tests positive, does the employee need to retest prior to coming back to work? No.**

Employees should follow existing agency protocols for isolation [according to CDC guidance.](#)

**Are unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees who travel but do not report to a central office onsite each workday still required to be tested each week?**

Yes. Any unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee who presents to a NJ TRANSIT owned or controlled location is required to submit to a minimum of once-weekly testing.

**How frequently will employees be tested, and will they be asked to consent to each test?**

Unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees must submit to COVID-19 testing at least once per week (between Sunday and Saturday of each week) and will be asked to consent to each test and for the release of the result to their employer.

**What if an agency receives a notification from the vendor of a positive test result, but the employee still reports to work?**

Employees must report a positive test result to the NJ TRANSIT COVID-19 Hotline as soon as they receive a positive result. Upon learning of a positive case from an employee or the vendor, the agency is responsible for directing the employee to leave the workplace and isolate, [according to CDC guidance.](#)

**If an employee is unvaccinated at the direction of their medical provider or has requested religious exemption, does the employee still have to be tested weekly?**

Yes. Any unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee must submit to testing at least once per week.

**What happens if an employee declines to be tested due to a medical issue, disability, or other requested exemption?**

To be exempt from testing, an employee must submit a request for accommodation pursuant to the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), N.J.S.A., 10:5-1 et seq., the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq., or other applicable law.

**What happens if an employee declines to be tested and has not been granted an accommodation pursuant to applicable law?**

Employees without an approved accommodation who do not comply with the agency's testing requirements will be subject to progressive disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with NJ TRANSIT's existing disciplinary procedures for employees who are not

complaint with a company policy.

**What type of test is being provided to unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees?** The Testing provider, Vault, offers a Saliva PCR test. The test is a [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) Emergency Use Authorization-authorized molecular test](#) that uses a quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) to identify the presence of viral transcripts which, if present, confirm an active infection of COVID-19.

**How reliable is this test?**

The test provided by Vault meets FDA sensitivity and specificity standards for the detection of COVID-19. The use of saliva as the primary test material is directly comparable to all other sample types currently used for testing. Positive test results are very reliable; however, an individual could be tested too early in the course of their illness to detect the virus, resulting in a false negative test.

**What type of sample is required, and how will it be collected?**

The testing program utilizes the Saliva PCR test to identify virus particles. Saliva is deposited into a test tube, similar to giving a specimen for the well-known commercial genetic testing companies. As compared with the nasopharyngeal swab method, this testing method reduces risk of transmission, reduces use of personal protective equipment. NJ TRANSIT will mail tests directly to employees' homes; employees will also have the option to opt out of at-home testing and receive test kits from their work locations.

*Scheduling and Payment*

**If an unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee does not enter the workplace for a full week or longer, must the covered worker submit testing for that week?**

If the unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employee is not physically on-site in their workplace (including but not limited to NJ TRANSIT field locations, stations, terminals, vehicles) during a week where testing would otherwise be required, the worker is not required to submit to testing for that week. Employees are permitted to report to the workplace before they have been tested that week, or before their result has been processed, so long as they are asymptomatic.

**Is the employee obligated to schedule the test and travel to the testing site?**

NJ TRANSIT will utilize at-home testing.

**When will testing be completed by employees?**

Employees will perform testing at their home.

**Will employees be responsible for paying for the test? Will the employees' insurance be billed for the test?**

No. Testing done through state agencies is at zero cost to employees. Testing will be provided to employees, and employees will not be asked to provide insurance information, nor will they be charged for fees related to COVID-19 testing.

**If an employee's test is positive, will the employee be responsible for paying for follow-up care if needed?**

The employee should review their medical insurance coverage regarding follow-up care.

## *Testing Site*

### **Who will be administering the test and what are their qualifications?**

The tests will be self-administered and supervised by a medical professional virtually via a telehealth portal. More information will be provided by the testing vendors.

## *Communication and Interpretation of Results*

**When will the results be provided to employees, and how will results remain confidential?** Test results will be provided via email to the employee and, with employee consent, will be provided to a limited number of NJ TRANSIT Medical Services staff through a HIPAA-compliant platform.

### **Will the testing vendor or the state report a positive result to anyone?**

The entity conducting the test, Vault, will be responsible for reporting positive tests to the local health department and NJDOH Communicable Disease Service as required by state law. Results will also be shared, with employee consent, with a limited number of NJ TRANSIT Medical Services staff through a secure, HIPAA-compliant platform for compliance monitoring.

## *Privacy*

**What personal information does the employee need to provide to the test provider?** Employees will electronically enter their name, date of birth, and email address when registering with and before completing testing with Vault. Employees must also provide their home addresses to Vault to receive tests at their address. Employees may be required to provide additional information as requested by Vault.

### **How will personal information and test results be kept confidential and secure (i.e., restricted from unauthorized access or disclosure)?**

Any medical information provided to NJ TRANSIT will be maintained confidentially and stored separately from the employee's personnel file, thus limiting access to this confidential information. Only a limited number of NJ TRANSIT Medical Services staff have access to these files.

**Which NJ TRANSIT representative(s) will have access to the employee's result?** NJ TRANSIT will assign a limited number of Medical Services staff to access Vault's secure and HIPAA compliant dashboard that contains employee information and test results.

## *Seeking Additional Help*

### **I have a flexible work arrangement plan that was approved before the onset of COVID-19. What is NJ TRANSIT's flexible work arrangement going forward?**






All employees should return to full-time in-person work at their work site effective Monday, November 15, unless they have an approved Reasonable Accommodation based on a disability to work from home.

NJ TRANSIT Policy 3.12 regarding flexible work arrangements is on hiatus until further notice.

**How can an employee access testing if they are experiencing symptoms or have a known exposure?**

Free testing is provided in each New Jersey county and can be located on the [NJ COVID-19 Information Hub](#).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ensures that COVID-19 tests are available at no cost nationwide at health centers and select pharmacies:

- [Find a health center near you](#). Please call ahead to make an appointment.
- [CVS Health](#) 
- [Local independent pharmacies](#) 
- [Rite Aid](#) 
- [Walgreens](#) 
- [Walmart in partnership with Quest Diagnostics](#) 

**How can employees request a new vaccination card if they lost their COVID-19 vaccination card?** If you lost your COVID-19 vaccination card, you can request your immunization record by visiting the [New Jersey Immunization Information System \(NJIS\) website](#). Once on this page, complete the following actions:

- Click on "Submit a Request" from the top blue ribbon.
- Click "I want to request a copy of my immunization record from NJIS", which will open a form which you need to complete. Note: You will need to attach a copy of your photo ID. Acceptable forms of ID include: a state-issued photo driver's license with address; a state-issued photo nondriver's identification card with address; a similar form of identification issued by this State, another state, or the Federal government; or a photo identification card issued by a New Jersey County Clerk.
- If you wish to have a copy of the COVID-19 vaccine lot number, please write this in the description section of the ticket.
- Click "Send" to submit your request, and your request will typically be processed within 24-48 business hours.
- Note: All immunization records will be mailed. They cannot be emailed.

More information can be found at: <https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/slowing-the-spread/how-do-i-get-a-new-copy-of-my-covid-19-vaccination-card-is-there-an-app-or-a-digital-copy>.