



Inclusion Through  
Diversity

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*"Promoting excellence in County operations while respecting the needs of the people we serve."*

**Tompkins County COVID-19 Directive #6**  
**Mandatory Vaccination and Surveillance Testing Program**  
**September 27, 2021 - Implementation begins October 4, 2021, Rev. 12/03/2021**  
**March 22, 2022 Update**

On August 10, 2021 the Tompkins County Legislature adopted a policy which mandates COVID 19 vaccination or participation in a testing program for all employees. This program will begin on October 4, 2021.

**Sharing Vaccination Status**

Employees should share their vaccination status through the secure vaccination attestation portal. Vaccine information will be kept confidential and accessible only to Human Resources. Employees who have not received an FDA-authorized vaccine or who choose to not report their vaccination information within the portal will be considered to be unvaccinated.

Once a vaccinated employee (two weeks post final dose of vaccine, which is first dose for Johnson and Johnson and second dose for Pfizer and Moderna) has submitted their attestation they will not be subject to twice weekly COVID-19 testing. **Employees are encouraged to submit additional booster information into the user portal, this information is **not** required at this time.**

**How to Access the Vaccine Attestation**

Employees can access the Vaccine Attestation at <https://lfweb.tompkins-co.org/Forms/TCVaccinationQ>. Employees are asked to provide information about their vaccine and upload a picture of their vaccination card OR a screenshot of their Excelsior Pass. The Excelsior Pass information can be uploaded in place of the vaccine card information within the form. If an employee is unable to upload this information or access the Vaccine Attestation, they can work with Human Resources (607-274-5526) to establish an alternative method to provide their information.

**On-Site Surveillance Testing for Unvaccinated and/or Unattested Employees**

Employees who are unable to be vaccinated, choose to not be vaccinated, or do not attest their vaccination status **are required to complete mandatory testing ~~twice~~ once a week**. Tests are expected to be completed and submitted at one of the seven sample collection boxes (detailed below) by 12pm on Tuesdays **OR Thursdays** and ~~Fridays~~ of each week. Samples may be dropped off beginning at 1pm the day prior to the collection day (Monday or Wednesday).

**If an employee misses a collection day, they are expected to coordinate a sample submission with the Sample Collection Specialist via email at [SampleCollection@tompkins-co.org](mailto:SampleCollection@tompkins-co.org) or phone at 607-274-6627.**

**If you are notified through the patient portal or by the County that the result of your sample is "Indeterminate" due to specimen integrity issue, please contact the Sample Collection Specialist to repeat testing. If the repeated test is deemed "indeterminate" a second time, arrangements must be made for an observed test to ensure validity and proper sample collection.**

**Saliva Sample Collection**

Please collect your sample on the day you plan to drop it off in a collection bin. Do not eat, drink, chew gum, or smoke for 30 minutes before providing the sample.

Follow the instructions provided on the collection kit, which include:

#### **SAMPLE COLLECTION INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. No food or drink 30 minutes before saliva collection. This includes no use of tobacco or tobacco products.
2. Wash/sanitize hands before collection.
3. Spit 3 mL in the tube provided. Any bubbles should be above the 3 mL mark.
4. Cap the saliva tube tightly. Leaking tubes will cause your sample to be rejected.
5. Clearly label your name, date of birth, and collection date on the label on the tube. **Samples without clear labels will be rejected.**
6. From here follow the instructions below depending on if you have access to a smartphone/tablet/computer or will need assistance completing registration.

#### **REGISTRATION/DROP-OFF INSTRUCTIONS FOR THOSE THAT HAVE ACCESS TO AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE PRIOR TO DROP OFF:**

1. Complete Sample Collection Instructions above and then open your smartphone Camera App (or download from the App or Play Store) and scan the QR code (the symbol affixed to the tube) **OR** log on to QR.cayugalab.com on a computer.
2. Click on “Register Sample” and enter the Tompkins County Pin of 73389.
3. Complete your registration information.
4. Place the tube in the bag.
5. Wash your hands.
6. Return your sample to designated drop-off location and pick up your kit for the next testing date.

#### **REGISTRATION/DROP-OFF INSTRUCTIONS FOR THOSE THAT DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE PRIOR TO SAMPLE DROP OFF:**

1. Complete Sample Collection Instructions above and place your tube in the bag with the QR code showing.
2. Bring your sample to the Health Department from 9am – 11:00am on your collection day and ask for assistance.
3. Upon arrival at the Health Department, the Sample Collection Specialist will assist with registration.
4. Place your registered sample in the Collection Bin and make sure to pick up your kit for your next testing day.

#### **Dropping Off Your Saliva Sample**

The saliva self-collection method does not require you to preregister for a testing appointment. **Vials in sealed plastic bags must be dropped off on Tuesdays or Thursdays by 12:00pm in the collection bin at one of the designated locations below.** You can pick up a new self-collection kit each time you drop off your sample. All employees are expected to deliver their sample to the following locations:

#### **DESIGNATED SECURE DROP OFF LOCATIONS:**

1. **Department of Emergency Response**, located in the atrium area of 92 Brown Road, Ithaca. Open 6:45 AM – 4:30 PM Monday – Friday. **Samples from this site will be collected Monday – Friday to accommodate the 24/7 operations and shift work.**
2. **Facilities and Highway Building**, located near the Highway department’s reception desk of 170 Bostwick Road, Ithaca. Open from 7:30 AM - 4:00 PM M-Th. and 7:30 AM - 3:30 PM Fri.
3. **Health Department**, located at the front desk of 55 Brown Road, Ithaca. Open 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM Monday – Friday.

4. **Human Resources**, buzz in to Human Resources for drop off at 125 E. Court Street, Ithaca. Open 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM Monday – Friday.
5. **Human Services Building**, located **near the entrance at** 320 W. State Street, Ithaca. Open 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM Monday – Friday.
6. **Mental Health Department**, located in the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor Kitchen/Break Room. For employees not located at Mental Health, the Administrative Assistant will assist you in accessing this area. Open 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM Monday – Friday.
7. **Sheriff's Department**, located at the entranceway of the Administrative Offices at 779 Warren Road, Ithaca. Open 24/7. **Samples from this site will be collected Monday – Friday to accommodate the 24/7 operations and shift work.**



### **Surveillance Testing for Vaccinated Employees**

Employees who are fully vaccinated and have provided their completed attestations are NOT required to complete mandatory testing. However, if an employee chooses to participate in the surveillance testing program, they may choose to do so free of charge. Tests are expected to be completed and submitted by 12pm on Tuesday and/or **Thursdays** using the Sample Collection instructions above. Kits are located at the Sample Collection sites.

### **Testing if You Have Symptoms**

Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, should not access the Tompkins County Employee COVID-19 Surveillance Program and is expected to seek medical advice and testing.

Employees should register for an appointment to access one of Cayuga Health sampling centers and/or contact their primary care provider. You should not access County property to drop off a saliva sample if symptomatic.

### **Opting Out of this Program**

If an employee does not comply with mandatory vaccinations or surveillance testing, the County will follow a progressive discipline process, up to and including termination for not following this directive.

### **Exemption from Saliva Testing**

**Non-vaccinated/non-attested employees who have requested and received written approval for a reasonable accommodation due to a medical inability to participate in the saliva testing program can use the Cayuga Health Systems testing site at Ithaca Mall for swab testing. The Cayuga Health Systems site is open Monday - Friday, 8am - 6pm and Sunday, 10am - 2pm. Employees may start or end their shifts at the sample site or receive an accommodation from their supervisors to sample mid shift. Employees who work shifts outside of the hours provided by the sample site will be provided up to an hour of additional time to be tested. They should work with their supervisors to accommodate the departmental schedule as to not incur overtime costs.**

**When employees receive their testing results from the Cayuga Health System portal, they must provide a copy of their result including date of sample collection to the Commissioner of Human Resources. The results can be shared via a print copy, screenshot, pdf attachment, etc. Employees who have received**

an accommodation are expected to continue to test on a weekly basis and report these results each week. Failure to share the results with the Commissioner of Human Resources will be considered as a missed test.

## Mandatory Vaccination and Testing Program FAQ's

### How many times a week will testing be required for people who are not fully vaccinated or refuse to attest their vaccination status? How was this frequency determined?

- Testing will be required ~~twice~~ **once** a week for individuals who are unvaccinated or have not attested their vaccination status through the Vaccine Attestation Portal.
- The frequency of testing was determined by the average incubation for COVID-19 ranging from 3-5 days. ~~The frequency of testing has been updated to follow the proposed Federal guidance.~~

### Who is exempted from Surveillance testing?

- Vaccinated employees are exempt from surveillance testing once the following conditions are met:
  1. ***They are fully vaccinated.*** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently defines full immunization as two weeks after your final dose (if you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, this will be two weeks after your dose. If you received the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, this will be two weeks after your second dose.)
  2. ***Their immunization card is on record with the Office of Human Resources.*** Once fully immunized, upload a copy of your vaccine card into the vaccine attestation portal.
  3. ***They are asymptomatic.*** Should you become [symptomatic for COVID-19](#), you must not come onsite until you seek medical advice.

### Where will the testing take place? Can the sample to be dropped off on work time?

- Testing vials will be distributed at seven drop-off locations throughout the County facilities. Employees are asked to collect their sample within 24 hours of the deadline for dropping off their sample at these locations (**the deadline is 12pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays**). They can provide their sample during work time. If the employee needs to travel offsite to deliver their sample they may utilize the traditional means used to travel for County related business and do so during the work hours. **For employees that work shifts or may not be onsite Tuesdays and Thursdays but work throughout the week, they may drop their samples off Sunday after 12pm through Friday before 12pm at the 24/7 collection bins located at the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office and Department of Emergency Response.**

### If an employee is between doses of their vaccination or not two full weeks beyond the second test should they participate in the Surveillance testing?

- Yes. Employees should participate until two weeks after their final dose. At that time, the employee should update their attestation and will no longer need to participate in the program.

### Who will pay for the testing?

- Testing expenses will be covered by Tompkins County, individual employees are not responsible for paying these expenses out of pocket.

### What happens if someone misses their mandatory surveillance testing sample drop off deadline?

- If an employee is scheduled to be off on a collection day, they should notify the Sample Collection Specialist to not expect their sample and are expected to bring a sample to the Health Department by 12pm on the first day they return to work.
- If a sample is not received, the Sample Collection Specialist will notify both the employee and the Office of Human Resources that no sample was received and follow up will be taken.

### What happens if a sample is rejected or unusable?

- If an employee's sample is rejected due to it being unusable, the employee will be notified and expected to test again during the next testing session. If an employee continually has rejected or

unusable samples, they will need to work with the Sample Collection Specialist to ensure proper sample collection. If an employee is found to be purposefully tampering with the sample, they may face progressive discipline.

**What happens if an employee is unable or unwilling to get vaccinated and does not want to participate in the surveillance testing program?**

- If an employee does not comply with mandatory vaccinations or surveillance testing, the County will follow a progressive discipline process, up to and including termination for not following this directive.

**If an employee does not have access to a smartphone or computer how can they register their sample?**

- The Sample Collection Specialist can assist the employee in registering their sample ~~between 9am – 11am during collection days at the Health Department located at 55 Brown Road, Ithaca New York.~~ The Sample Collection can be reached at [SampleCollection@tompkins-co.org](mailto:SampleCollection@tompkins-co.org) or by **direct phone at 607-274-6627 to assist in registration of samples.**

**Who will have access to the samples and how will they ensure that all samples have been collected?**

- A member of the Tompkins County Health Department known as the Sample Collection Specialist (which is a non-competitive Driver position) will collect samples from all seven sample locations.
- This team member will log the samples by last name prior to transporting the samples to the laboratory and ensure that all information is treated in a confidential manner.
- If an unvaccinated or unattested individual does not provide a sample, the individual and Human Resources will be notified by the Sample Collection Specialist.

**What should an employee do if there are no sample collection kits onsite?**

- The employee should notify the Sample Collection Specialist if there are no samples found on-site and the Sample Collection Specialist will arrange delivery of additional sample kits to the site and the employee.

**Will supervisors be notified of vaccination status for their employees?**

- No. Supervisors will not be notified of the employee's vaccination status. County Administration, Human Resources, and the Health Department will work together to ensure that everyone that has not attested their vaccination status is participating in the program.
- All employees are eligible to participate in the Surveillance Testing program, despite vaccination status.
- If an employee needs to provide a sample during worktime they should coordinate with their supervisor, however they do not need to share vaccination status.

**Where can an employee go to get vaccinated?**

- Employees can receive vaccine in the following locations:
  - [TCHD clinics and pop-ups](#)
  - [On-going vaccination sites](#)
- ProAct will have the Pfizer dose of the COVID vaccine available at all Tompkins County 2021 Flu shot clinics. While the flu shot is available for employees and dependents age 18+, the COVID shot is available for employees and dependents age 12+. Employees and eligible family members do not need to be covered by county/consortium insurance to get either shot, but they do need to provide their health insurance information (from wherever) while registering online.

### Who will pay for the vaccines?

- There is no charge or co-pay to be vaccinated at the NYS-operated clinics or at the Cayuga Health Service clinic. You will be asked if you have insurance or Medicare, so please bring your card(s) with you to be vaccinated.

### How does an employee attest or change their vaccination status **and/or add in booster shot information?**

- Employees can access the Vaccine Attestation at <https://lfweb.tompkins-co.org/Forms/TCVaccinationQ>. Employees are asked to provide information about their vaccine and upload a picture of their vaccination card. The Excelsior Pass information can be uploaded in place of the vaccine card information within the form. If an employee is unable to upload this information or access the Vaccine Attestation, they can work with Human Resources (607-274-5526) to establish an alternative method to provide their information.

### If an employee is vaccinated and wants to participate in the surveillance program how do they participate?

- Any Tompkins County Employee may voluntarily participate in the program by providing their samples on either Tuesday or ~~Thursday~~ ~~Friday~~, or both, of any given week. They will follow the same instructions for completing registration via the QR code on the sample test kit. They can provide their sample during worktime and follow the same protocols as unvaccinated employees. **For employees working 24/7 operations they can deposit their sample at the Tompkins County Sheriffs Office or Department of Emergency Response on Sunday-Friday.**

### If an employee is feeling symptomatic may they use the surveillance testing program for testing?

- No. Should an employee become symptomatic for COVID-19, they may not come onsite until they seek medical advice.

### Should a person who has had a confirmed COVID-19 positive still participate in the surveillance program?

- **Employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 will be exempted from the surveillance testing program for 90 days after they have been released from ~~isolation from their local health department~~. A copy of the positive result or isolation release should be filed with Human Resources.**

### How quickly will test results be received?

- Results will be put into the patient portal within 24-56 hours from delivery to the lab at Cayuga Health Systems (tests will arrive at the test lab at approximately 1:30 pm on collection days).

### Why is surveillance testing only required for unvaccinated individuals?

- Surveillance testing is being provided as a layer of disease control. Unvaccinated individuals are more likely to spread COVID-19 than vaccinated individuals. Voluntary participation is encouraged for all employees.

### If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 as a result of the surveillance testing, how will they be notified? Who else is notified?

- ~~Their local Health Department will then conduct contact tracing and notify any individuals who are close contacts to the positive case. Employees may also check the online portal through Cayuga Medical Center to receive their results.~~ The employee will be notified by their local Health Department and/or through the Cayuga Health System/Cayuga Medical Center portal.

### Can an employee work while awaiting their surveillance test results?

- Yes. Employees awaiting surveillance testing results may continue to work. If an employee becomes symptomatic they should not test through the surveillance program nor come on-site, instead they should seek medical advice and testing off-site.

### What is the guidance for quarantining if exposed to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, if fully vaccinated? If unvaccinated? What types of leave are in place for this?

- ~~Any individual identified through contact tracing as someone who has been in contact with a known COVID-19 case, will be ordered into mandatory quarantine for 10 days from the last date of exposure to a known COVID-19 case.~~
- ~~Exception: Those who have received their final dose of the vaccine and at least two weeks have passed since the final dose, and display no symptoms, are no longer required to quarantine.~~
- ~~Employees who are required to quarantine if they are exposed to COVID-19 should consult with their supervisor about whether they can work from home during the quarantine period. Employees may otherwise be eligible to utilize FFCRA leave.~~
- For current guidance regarding isolation and quarantine please refer to the [New York State's Approach to Isolation and Quarantine](#).

### What is the protocol for a positive case in an on-site employee?

- If a person tests positive they will be notified by Cayuga Health Systems and will be asked to immediately isolate. ~~At that time, the Health Department will conduct contact tracing and notify individuals who have been contacts (at their worksite and in other locations) of their need to quarantine. Worksites should not conduct their own contact tracing.~~
- For current guidance regarding isolation and quarantine please refer to the [New York State's Approach to Isolation and Quarantine](#).
- The positive employee should stay home and follow the guidance provided by their local Health Department, **Cayuga Health Systems and/or Health Care provider**. They must notify their department head/supervisor that they will not be reporting to work. They may choose but they are not obligated to inform their department head/supervisor that they are in quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19.
- If the employee is asymptomatic and is able to still work from home, they might want to discuss remote work options with their department head/supervisor in order to be able to work from home during this time.

### If a person tests positive for COVID-19 what leaves are available for them?

- ~~Employees who are required to isolate after testing positive for COVID-19 may be eligible to utilize FFCRA leave.~~ the NYS COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave as outlined in the [Human Resources Memo dated 1/14/2022](#).

### Are temporary employees and/or interns required to participate in this program?

- Yes, anyone working on a County site is required to participate in this program, this includes seasonal employees, project assistants, and interns. Our JTPA participants are required to follow the guidelines of the employer for whom they are working.

### If third doses or boosters are needed, how will this program adapt or change?

- As we await further State and Federal guidance regarding the boosters and third dose vaccinations, we are not currently including them in the program. As new guidance is released, there may be updates and/or changes to the program.

**\*\*NOTE THESE ARE NOTES FROM THE 9.9.21 ZOOM EVENT – THIS DOCUMENT WILL NOT BE UPDATED\*\***

**9.9.21 Staff Town Hall on Vaccine Mandate / Testing Program Notes**

Directive #6 will begin in October.

The purpose of this program is to monitor and gauge the impacts from COVID-19 and to help keep our employees safe and healthy.

<i>Is the County going to make vaccinations mandatory for those who are not yet vaccinated?</i>	Yes. It will be mandatory for all employees with an option for opting out by testing 2x/week.
<i>What are the exemptions? Does proof need to be provided?</i>	Proof is not required. If you attest to not being vaccinated or do not attest then you are required to participate in the testing program.
<i>When you say "there will continue to be religious and medical exemptions with the offer of a testing program for those individuals." Do you mean that those who receive an exemption will be 'required' to get testing or will be 'offered' testing?</i>	Non-vaccinated employees are <b>required</b> to be tested.
<i>If an employee is scheduled to work from home on Tuesdays or Fridays, how will accommodations be made for testing?</i>	This is saliva sample testing. You can drop it off at one of seven locations up to 24 hours before noon on Tuesdays and Fridays. The driver who will be collecting and transporting samples will be available to support as well.
<i>Who is responsible for tracking the submission by employees of the bi-weekly tests?</i>	Employees will be contacted by the driver/collection specialist if they do not have their sample. HR will be the follow up communication. Kits for sample collection are clearly marked and are available by the drop off locations.
<i>For employees that will need to be given time to allow for testing are they to be given a county vehicle to drive to test site or are we paying them to drive their own vehicle?</i>	Employees can drop off samples during work time. There are 7 drop spots across the county. Travel and use of County vehicles is dependent on your departmental policies, but are allowed to be used for drop off. Anyone can drop a sample off at any drop box.
<i>Where do they go at the Facilities department to do the testing?</i>	There will be a box at the Highway department reception of Bostwick road. For sample collection, you may do it wherever you choose, you may do it at home or at work. It does require spitting in a tube, so you will want to do it away from others.
<i>Will employees who work remotely get tested? If I'm only working in the office on Mondays, should I submit one sample Monday afternoon in the drop box, or do I have to bring one to the Health Dept in the morning and drop one in the drop box in the afternoon?</i>	Employees who work remotely are expected to provide their sample during the sample collection times indicated.  You may drop off a sample up to 24 hours before the collection time.
<i>What should an employee do if they can not medically produce enough saliva to participate in the program.</i>	An employee that can not medically produce enough saliva can receive a medical exemption by working with Human Resources and will be expected to test at the mall site. Human Resources and/or the driver/ collection specialist will communicate with you on this.
<i>I am wondering about the progressive discipline provision of the county's</i>	This policy follows traditional discipline outlined in all contracts and County policies.

<p><i>testing/vaccination policy. Can you tell me what the progression is and whether the county had to run this through the union?</i></p>	<p>It includes counseling and talking through why it isn't being followed. Not complying with this would be like not complying with another County policy.</p>
<p><i>If someone has been vaccinated and gets covid and fully recovers can they still pick up the variant again and transmit it?</i></p>	<p>Yes, but it is exceedingly rare.</p>
<p><i>On the CDC website it states that fully vaccinated people with the Delta variant can spread the disease. What protocols are in place to ensure that those people are not COVID-19 positive and spreading the disease?</i></p>	<p>Vaccines limit the exposure points. We do isolation for positive cases regardless of vaccination status, and do contact tracing and quarantine for contacts.</p> <p>There is still an indoor mask advisory for our community, mandatory masking within County properties, and all of our buildings should have signage on monitoring yourself for symptoms.</p>
<p><i>The CDC also states that the virus can be spread by people with no symptoms or before symptoms are detected. How is this being tracked in both the vaccinated and unvaccinated persons? Within our workplace?</i></p>	<p>Asymptomatic individuals can spread the disease. Though viral load counts are lower. We look for all positives we can find, testing is the key tool to do that.</p>
<p><i>It is clear from the data that vaccinated persons can be infected and transmit the virus. What are your thoughts about how public safety can truly be protected by mandating testing only from unvaccinated persons?</i></p>	<p>There are more restrictions on unvaccinated individuals. Unvaccinated positives are more likely to be negatively impacted by the disease.</p>
<p><i>From what I have researched, Covid19 tests are created for those who are symptomatic. False negatives and positives are the likely outcome of testing asymptomatic people. It appears that the science is being disregarded. The system is specifically focusing on unvaccinated persons that pose no more threat than those who have been vaccinated. Do you have any thoughts about that?</i></p>	<p>There are lots of different types of testing out there. We are using PCR which is the most sensitive available – it tests for RNA of the virus, while there is the possibility of false results it is very rare.</p>
<p><i>At one of the earlier heights of the pandemic before any vaccines were on the market, this county used social distancing, masks, and daily self-reporting. These protocols were touted each week as being extremely effective in this county. Given testing was designed for those with symptoms, and vaccinated persons are not immune from spreading, or becoming infected, How is mandating twice weekly testing for unvaccinated persons thought to improve the situation?</i></p>	<p>Testing is not just used for symptomatic individuals. We have used surveillance testing throughout the pandemic. We are still doing masks indoors in County buildings, we have self-reporting signage on each building, and social distancing is something we still recommend people consider – though as things have returned more toward normal we have relaxed some of the distancing rules. The Legislature has made the decision to put this in place – the testing is designed for unvaccinated or unwilling to share status individuals. Testing 2x/week will help us identify cases sooner and limit exposures with a positive case. Unvaccinated individuals are more likely to become infected and ill.</p>

<i>What is happening with booster shots?</i>	Boosters are not yet available. The federal CDC group that meets on this will be meeting on 9/17 to discuss. We are giving third doses to individuals who are immunocompromised, which is different than a “booster” which would be an additional dose if vaccines are waning in effectiveness.
<i>Will Moderna and J&amp;J seek full FDA approval? When can we expect them to also be full fledged vaccines?</i>	They are both seeking FDA approval. We do not know when this will be finalized.
<i>Is there any indication that Federal Tax money will be withheld unless policies of this nature are implemented and adhered to?</i>	We have not heard about this at this time.
<i>Is the legislature aware that there are federal laws that require potential participants the choice to opt out of either of these?</i>	We discussed this policy with our Labor Counsel and County Attorney before instituting the program.  This argument has changed once the Pfizer vaccine was approved fully.
<i>Because both the Covid 19 tests , as well as the vaccines themselves have been created for Emergency Authorized Use only, there are federal laws in place that require consent for either of these, by the prospective user. Is anyone answering questions today familiar with the fact that EUA products are by definition experimental and thus require the right to refuse?</i>	From Counsel: <i>Even before that approval Courts were rejecting this argument for two reasons. First, the regulation does not apply to States (Counties) or private employers. Second, the section itself says that persons must be informed of the consequences of refusing the administration of the product. That certainly suggests that persons can refuse the product but there can be consequences.</i>
<i>Since it is a well know fact that break through cases are very common, how come only non-vaccinated employees are being tested?</i>	We know that unvaccinated individuals are more likely to contract COVID even though there have been breakthrough cases. As there is more risk in that population testing is required.
<i>If we are moving from a Pandemic perspective of COVID to a perspective of viewing COVID as Endemic, for how long do you believe it will be necessary to have unvaccinated or non-attesting employees participate in twice per week testing? When do you foresee the need for this testing to end?</i>	We are shifting to a phase of understanding COVID is something we’ll need to live with long term. Our focus right now is on severity of illness, and our goal is to protect those who don’t have access to vaccine (children) or immunocompromised individuals. If we get more and more people vaccinated and hospitalizations remain low we’ll need to consider all of the public health guidance we’ve put in place. This is the direction the Legislature has given at this point and we will reassess as the situation changes.
<i>Have any other alternatives been discussed, or considered? The law clearly states that potential participants need to be informed of the alternatives to the products that are available and of their benefits and risks.</i>	Testing is the alternative to mandatory vaccination.
<i>How will this work for shift workers? I work 2pm-12am with a rotating schedule with no guarantee i will work any given monday or thursday.</i>	If there is something that comes up that won’t work 24 hours ahead of time, you can communicate with the driver/collection specialist on this.

<i>What happens if you are mandated by the Governor to have all County Employees vaccinated?</i>	At that point we would follow that directive. We would work through that process. The Governor has mandated it for certain employer types, many of which include testing like ours.
<i>what are the consequences for missing repeated samples?</i>	This falls to Human Resources / Departments and the discipline process. IF there were continual lack of following the process, it could lead to termination.
<i>If an employee is not physically at work between testing periods, do they still have to be tested?</i>	If they are away or at a conference or on vacation, no. However on return they will need to resume the testing program.
<i>What are the consequences of refusing testing?</i>	The progressive discipline policy has been outlined within our policies and procedures and can be found in union agreements.
<i>Since this will take away from work time - approximately four hours a week - since I work at home - do we get comp time?</i>	No – this will be done during work time. We will work through accommodations if necessary.
<i>will the results be known same day (rapid tests?) or next day?</i>	Generally speaking we’re getting next-day results. We’re working with Cayuga Health System. Individuals are notified by the hospital through the patient portal. A positive test result will be contact traced and the person will be placed in isolation by their local health department.
<i>How much is this going to cost the County? Is this going to be reimbursed by the state or federal government?</i>	This is a reimbursable program under FEMA and the COVID emergency.
<i>If an employee has only received the first of the 2 vaccines by October 1st, will they be required to test? At what point would they be able to discontinue testing?</i>	Testing will be required until you are fully vaccinated (2 weeks past second dose of Pfizer or Moderna, or 2 weeks past first dose of Johnson and Johnson).
<i>Why did the County feel they needed to threaten with discipline/termination?</i>	This is the same as all of our other policies.
<i>Can we test out with antibody testing?</i>	No. It is not yet best practice to use antibody testing to exempt from vaccination. We encourage people who have been positive to still get vaccinated.
<i>Can an employee opt to do the nasal swab or only if medically unable to do the spit? Would the time spent testing at the mall site be covered as work time?</i>	This would be something we’d work with the employee on. For those that need that accommodation they will need to work with Human Resources.
<i>Why is this taking so long?</i>	There are a lot of logistics. We are working to be aware of all who are vaccinated, and ensure that there was enough time following the legislature’s policy for folks to get vaccinated.
<i>Does the County receive funding for each vaccinated person?</i>	We do not.
<i>What are the latest stats on breakthrough infections for the County?</i>	Go to this <a href="#">link</a> . It is posted weekly.
<i>Tompkins county has one of the highest vaccination rates around but at present a high rate of positive cases. Can we have statistics on the percentage of current positive cases have also already been fully</i>	See the link above.  We’re seeing higher rates here – though we’re a small sample size and we have a

<p><i>vaccinated compared to the unvaccinated????</i></p>	<p>unique population that has a higher vaccination rate.</p> <p>We expected numbers to rise as travel increased and the colleges returned and tested frequently.</p> <p>As new activities are done with less restrictions cases may increase. Our goal is to limit the severity of disease.</p>
<p><i>Why is daily attesting no longer good enough? I am not privy to the data from last year when we were doing daily attesting but how well or not well did that system work, and why can't it work now?</i></p>	<p>We've shifted from this because we have new tools.</p>
<p><i>I hear a lot of residents criticizing the County for not implementing an indoor mask mandate. Is this even within the legal authority to do this anymore? Or that we do not have the capacity to enforce it?</i></p>	<p>The phase that we're in requires smaller, more targeted approaches, including employers/businesses requiring vaccines and masks. Frank or the Legislature could mandate indoor masks – though Frank stated that we've been recommending this for several months and the difference with a mandate is enforcement, the mechanisms of enforcement may not lead to what we want to achieve. If you are uncomfortable with the level of masking somewhere, leave or do not enter if you are able.</p> <p>Tompkins County has mandated it for all of our buildings.</p>
<p><i>Is testing available to anyone regardless of vaccination status?</i></p>	<p>Yes. Vaccinated individuals may choose to use this program at their leisure.</p> <p><b>IF YOU ARE SYMPTOMATIC or not feeling well DO NOT COME INTO WORK. THIS PROGRAM IS NOT DESIGNED FOR SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS. TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER or GO TO THE MALL TESTING SITE.</b></p>
<p><i>As a vaccinated person that lives out of county - can i be tested in Tompkins following the same process as the unvaccinated even though I'm not certain if I have been in contact with a known positive? Will i have to pay for this even though i work for the county but live out of county?</i></p>	<p>You can participate any time.</p>
<p><i>What happens if an unvaccinated person gets the entire department sick? What recourses does a vaccinated employee have? How is the county protecting the vaccinated employees rights?</i></p>	<p>Generally speaking our goal is to limit exposures. That is why we've put these protocols in place.</p>
<p><i>The cost for twice a week testing is approximately \$31,040 per week resulting in an annual expense of \$1.6 million. Was the Federal Emergency Declaration extended beyond September 30th to allow for these</i></p>	<p>We cannot speak to the will of the Legislature. They are concerned about the spread of COVID, it mimics the State's policy they brought forward. The emergency</p>

<p><i>costs to be reimbursable? If it wasn't extended, how will the County pay for this? Yesterday the White-Collar Unit was asked to vote to ratify an agreement that would move members to the Platinum insurance plan to help save the County \$691,000 annually. This all seems like the Legislature made the decision because it is an election year and they do not want to risk their re-election by taking a firm stance and mandating the vaccine.</i></p>	<p>declaration has been extended through the end of the year at the Federal level.</p>
<p><i>How do we know that once we submit our sample for testing that it will not be tampered with</i></p>	<p>The samples will be put in locked boxes. This is the same as any sample you'd give any doctor, there is a chain of custody protocol.</p>
<p><i>Long term effects of the vaccine?</i></p>	<p>We have been using vaccines for decades. No one knows what may happen years from now, but science and studies on safety and effectiveness has been around a long time. The risks of COVID far outweigh risks of vaccines at this time.</p>
<p><i>How will i be able to contact the collection specialist to work around my work schedule?</i></p>	<p>There are collection boxes within 24/7 buildings. Once the collection specialist is on board you'll know how to reach them by phone or email .</p>
<p><i>is herd immunity even a serious consideration anymore? It seems have changed with percentages over the past year. It just seems to be get to 100% vaccinated correct?</i></p>	<p>We are trying to get to herd immunity – it's how vaccines work. Once we're vaccinated some people can test positive but it is less likely. Every chance we get to reduce spread is a positive for the whole population.</p>
<p><i>Is it true that this type of vaccine, being an mRNA vaccine, has never been used on humans before this? Can you explain what an mRNA vaccine is?</i></p>	<p>mRNA technology has been studied for many years. It is the mechanism that carries the genetic code to our cells to have our body mount an immune response if it were to encounter the real virus. All vaccines started as new.</p>
<p><i>What policies are in effect to support employees HIPPA rights?</i></p>	<p>HIPPA applies to covered entities, most employers do not fall under that. We are already responsible for protected information as an employer (SSN, disability, etc.) – Whether HIPPA applies to this is not particularly relevant as the County already values and actively protects people's privacy.</p>
<p><i>If an employee lives out of county will the Health Dept where they live be contacting them with the positive results? How can you be sure this would happen as some other county Health Depts are not as "on top of" contact tracing as Tompkins.</i></p>	<p>Most health departments have good processes in place, especially around notifying positive cases.</p>
<p><i>Why not antibody testing?</i></p>	<p>Right now the recommendation is to not use antibody testing in COVID decision making. The science may evolve, but because the situation is still emerging we do not know at this point.</p>
<p><i>While i was working last year with the public through the "pandemic" the county did not require me to be tested on a regular basis,</i></p>	<p>Times were different. We knew less about the disease, vaccines were not available, and we had to take different steps.</p>

<i>and in fact i had to continue to work while under quarantine. Why are we starting to test twice weekly now?</i>	
<i>Are the samples able to be collected at home and then submitted at collection sites?</i>	Yes. Kits will be at collection sites.
<i>Some of the buildings where the sample collections are you need a fob in order to enter. Will these buildings be open on testing days?</i>	We will work with buildings to make sure you can get in.
<i>Why are people acting like the COVID vaccine is the only vaccine that has been developed for people? Most people must have vaccines to attend schools, military, etc. Polio, smallpox, etc. are vaccines that millions of people have had for the good of the overall community. How is this vaccine different?</i>	<p>This is a complex issue. We know not everyone agrees, and there are hard emotions attached to these disagreements.</p> <p>From a public health perspective, vaccines are one of the single biggest advancements in human history. We must continue to be gracious with each other when we work through this.</p>

*Thank you all for participating. We are here to support our entire community and workforce. Thank you for all that you do for one another and the community.*