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DATE: October 29, 2021

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**SARATOGA COUNTY FIRST IN NEW YORK STATE TO PILOT "TEST TO STAY" PROGRAM
TO GIVE KIDS MORE TIME IN CLASS RECEIVING IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION**

Saratoga County Public Health to Administer Pilot Program with South Glens Falls School District

BALLSTON SPA – Saratoga County officials today announced a first-in-the-state pilot program to allow more students to remain in the classroom amid soaring COVID-19 quarantine orders for school-age children. "Test to Stay" (TTS) is a test-based protocol for k-12 students who have been exposed to COVID-19 in school or on a school bus that allows them attend classes in person rather than quarantine at home so long as they test negative for the virus and show no symptoms each day.

The "Test to Stay" protocol is currently a pilot program administered by Saratoga County Public Health Services (SCPHS) in the South Glens Falls Central School District (SGFSD). SCPHS and SGFSD are also partnering with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to evaluate the pilot. This effort will ensure that the quantitative and qualitative results help inform the national evidence base surrounding "Test to Stay" programs.

Theodore T. Kusnierz, Jr., Town of Moreau Supervisor and Chair of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors said, "Saratoga County has made our response to COVID our top priority and has led the charge statewide with effective and innovative COVID response measures. From being the first to implement protocols for high risk sports, to among the first to implement a seven-day test out program countywide, we are now leading with the 'Test to Stay' pilot program with South Glens Falls School District. Saratoga County is committed to putting students and families first in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 'Test to Stay' program will keep students in the classroom where they can learn and thrive and I'm eager to bring this initiative to school districts countywide as soon as practicable."

During the pilot, the "Test to Stay" (TTS) protocol, normal contact tracing will take place with the school district contacting families of students who are considered a close contact of a COVID positive individual. The TTS protocol allows parents or guardians the option to have their child tested daily in school as an alternative to having to quarantine. Students would arrive at school and report directly to the nurse's office for testing. A negative test will keep students in school. If a student tests positive, the parent and/or guardian will be required to pick up their child and quarantine their student.

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The goals of “Test to Stay” are to allow students to participate in in-person learning as safely as possible while lessening the burden of quarantine and multiple soft closures on students and their families, teachers, and school administrators. The “Test to Stay” approach, allows schools to maximize instruction time and minimize interruptions to learning.

Dr. Daniel Kuhles, Commissioner of Saratoga County Public Health Services said, “When responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to consider the social, emotional, and educational consequences that have impacted children and families. The Test to Stay pilot, in combination with the layered prevention strategies already present in schools, is an important step towards supporting their overall health and wellbeing.”

Phil Barrett, Town of Clifton Park Supervisor and Chair of the Public Health Transition Committee said, “The ‘Test to Stay’ protocol, coupled with our focus on making vaccines and boosters available to teachers and providing masks to school districts throughout our county is a common-sense approach to combating this virus and helping our students, families, and schools return to a more normal life.”

“Our goal at SGF is always 100 percent of students in the classroom, 100 percent of the time. This program will allow more students to receive in-classroom instruction, even during these uncertain times of quarantine. We are seeking to quarantine less and do more for our students and their families, and this pilot program is an excellent way to do just that” said South Glens Falls Central School District Superintendent Kristine Orr. “We are extremely proud to be the district working with Saratoga County for this enterprising pilot program.”

"WSWHE BOCES and schools in Saratoga County are grateful for the Saratoga County Public Health Services' efforts to keep our students in school. We are thrilled that the South Glens Falls Central School District will pilot the Test to Stay program. We look forward to fruitful results and using the data collected to extend the program to other districts in the county and hopefully to other parts of our region. Dr. Kuhles and his team's cooperation and planning have been at the forefront of helping our schools. As educators, we know that school is much more than learning and it's critical that our students continue to come to school every day to receive essential services in order to thrive, especially, marginalized students who are more likely to lose additional ground when if they are home due to one or more quarantine periods"

The pilot phase of the TTS protocol is scheduled to last several weeks. Upon conclusion, the evaluation team will review the effectiveness, feasibility, and scalability of the protocol. This information will be used to make recommendations as to whether the pilot should be amended, expanded to other school districts and private schools, or be withdrawn.

For more information about Saratoga County’s COVID-19 response, visit www.saratogacountyny.gov/covid.

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Putting Families First



Saratoga County

TEST

to

STAY

Keeping Kids In The Classroom