

Dear parent/educator,

Thanks for reaching out. We're keen to help others learn from our experience in setting up a parent-led rapid antigen testing screening program.

Our program was developed very quickly, over the course of two weeks, with a core team of five organizers. We have had an amazing response from our community, with over 170 kids and 90 households signing up so far. There is clearly a demand for this kind of program, and you should be prepared to handle rapid growth as best as your supply can accommodate.

Our program consists of five main components:

1. Planning and organizing
2. Securing test supply
3. Preparing and distributing tests
4. Reporting
5. Communication

More information on each component is below.

## **1. Planning and organizing**

EBCAT is made up of a small group of local parents. We work together primarily on Slack and through weekly Zoom meetings. There is a lot of work involved, so it's helpful to have at least five or six people involved in the central planning group.

This central group does the majority of the work, including:

- Planning how the program will work
- Sourcing tests
- Managing recruitment, sign-up and test supply
- Preparing test kits and getting them to distribution sites
- Coordinating with our local hospital (Michael Garron Hospital)
- Tracking supply and reporting on results
- Communications to inform, recruit, promote and field questions

We also have volunteers-at-large, who help with the distribution and other tasks as they come up.

Central coordination is demanding right at the start, but we hope that this intensity will taper off as signups and distributors stabilize.

## **2. Securing test supply**

At this point, our primary supplier for the rapid antigen tests is StaySafe, located in Waterloo (<https://staysafescreen.ca>). StaySafe is assessing interest from other programs through [this survey](#).

There are also several other potential ways to source rapid antigen tests:

- From the [Toronto Board of Trade](#) (or your local board of trade / chamber of commerce if you are outside Toronto). Indicate the name of your organization and limit the number of employees to under 150.
- From [your local pharmacy](#). We haven't had success through this method. It is targeted at business owners and you have to verify that you own a business. However, it could be a good way to get any school-affiliated daycares to source tests.
- Through [the Government of Ontario](#).
- Through the [Canadian Red Cross](#).

Note that each organization/supplier may have their own criteria to determine who they can distribute tests to. We have heard of other school groups having success through the Toronto Board of Trade.

A final organization to contact might be the **Creative Destruction Lab Rapid Screening Consortium** [here](#). This group has been providing training and test reporting support to many private schools. However, their tests are supplied through the Government of Ontario, which has [recently announced](#) it will stop providing tests to private schools. Although CDL has stated their desire to support public schools, it's unclear whether CDL will work with parent groups. They've informed us that they require the involvement of the board or school administrators.

### 3. Preparing and distributing tests

Our program uses a hub and spoke model for distribution of tests. We receive our supply at the home of one of our organizers. A small group of distributors then connect with this organizer to pick up the number of tests they will need to hand out that week (try to set one day/time for pick up to make it easier to coordinate). The distributors then prepare the test kits at their own homes for pick up by registered participants during scheduled pick-up windows that week.

Participants indicate which time slot works for them when they sign up; once they are added to our participant list, we email them with the address and name of their distributor. We provide participants with two tests per week per kid and instruct them to test before school on Mondays and Wednesdays or Thursdays.

To facilitate creation and distribution of kits, you will need volunteers to serve two roles (sometimes the same person is willing to do both):

1. **Prepare tests** - Because the Abbott Panbio tests we use come in boxes of 25 with a single bottle of buffer (liquid used for the tests) and 25 test tubes, we need to pre-fill the tubes before we hand them out. Splitting up boxes involves pre-filling test tubes with buffer and is the most laborious part of the process. Other models (e.g. handing out a box per household, or a box to pods made up of several households) might involve less coordination and labour, but require a steady test supply and stable program size. Because of concerns with buffer leakage and evaporation/condensation, in addition to basic supply challenges, we are distributing only a 1 week supply at a time packaged the day of or the day before test distribution. In some cases a distributor has a designated packager to split up the tasks.
2. **Distribute tests** - We have volunteers who agree to distribute kits to individual recipients on a set pickup day, along with providing a basic introduction and printed materials to new signups. Distributors host recipients outside their homes (usually on their porches). We have increased our number of distributors from 4 to 10 and are still growing. Each distributor runs a pickup for 1 hour per week, and we are limiting each site to 30 kids to distribute the test packaging burden (approx 1 hr to pack 30 kits). We ask parents when they are signing up to participate if they would be willing to be a distributor. Initially, we were packaging everything (pre-filled tubes, swabs and test devices) into individual plastic Ziploc bags for each participant. However, in an effort to reduce waste, we have moved to a “trick-and-test” model where we ask participants to bring their own reusable bag or container (i.e. a jar/mug is best to keep the tubes upright) to be filled with the appropriate number of tubes, swabs and test devices at pick up.

Our participant roster, pick up list, and inventory are all tracked using google sheets spreadsheets.

#### 4. Reporting

Our program has two main channels of reporting:

1. To our supplier - we need to tell them how many tests we have used, how many were inconclusive, and how many were positive. This is so they can collect evidence for the program’s effectiveness.
2. To Michael Garron Hospital - this is where program participants report the results of their tests

Generally, all suppliers of rapid tests require some level of reporting so this is important to plan for. To report to our supplier, we use the information from our test supply spreadsheet. Michael Garron Hospital will send us regular aggregate reports (no identifying information, just numbers) about how many tests were positive. EBCAT is required by StaySafe to report the number of tests used and their results (positive, negative, and inconclusive) to them on a weekly basis; we are doing this by assuming every test handed out is used (twice weekly) and asking people to

report only positive and inconclusive results (positives to MGH, inconclusive to us via email so they get a new test).

Michael Garron Hospital agreed to facilitate the coordination of reporting for EBCAT. They created an online form for us, which is hosted on their secure server. There is a link to the form on our website. Parents fill out the reporting form when they obtain a positive result on the rapid test. A physician at Michael Garron Hospital monitors the data coming in and if there are any aberrations (e.g. multiple rapid positives in a single class), they will connect with Toronto Public Health and the school. We also receive sporadic general guidance from a physician at Michael Garron regarding the design and delivery of our program. For example, MGH validated the use of the PanBio tests with their 'easy' oral-nasal swab for children ([www.tehn.ca/oralnasalswab](http://www.tehn.ca/oralnasalswab)). As a result of advice from MGH, we advise parents they can use this method, which is less invasive and more comfortable for children.

**IF YOU ARE IN MICHAEL GARRON'S CURRENT SCHOOL SUPPORT CATCHMENT**, MGH is willing to also support your reporting via a secure online form they will monitor. To include your testing program as part of this coordination, contact [Mghschoolsupport@tehn.ca](mailto:Mghschoolsupport@tehn.ca) to make this request.

If you are not in East Toronto, your catchment hospital might be able to set up a similar arrangement. Otherwise, you can determine the best way to have those who test positive inform you so that you can report it to the test providers. This might be through an anonymous form or through a direct email.

#### A note on case management with rapid antigen tests

The antigen tests our program uses (Abbott Panbio) have a very low false positivity rate (approx. 1 in 500), but when doing regular screening, false positives will happen. Toronto Public Health has yet to provide guidance on how to respond to positive antigen tests, except for the basic requirement to isolate the individual and any unvaccinated household members and seek followup testing at official testing centres. Our program's role is not to perform case or cohort management, only to provide tests (and in fact, we do not know who receives a positive test result). Our direction to all participants is that any child who tests positive with a rapid antigen test should isolate (ie. do not go to school), report the positive test result and seek PCR testing to confirm diagnosis of COVID-19.

## **5. Communications**

You will need to plan for communications to:

- Promote the program
- Support program participants
- Possibly communicate with media
- Possibly advocate to the school board/city/province for more testing

General information about our program is available on our website: [www.EBCAT.org](http://www.EBCAT.org). The site is a simple wix site with Google forms for signup and links to Google docs. It also includes links to registration and test reporting. One of our planning team members takes care of managing and updating this site as needed.

Promotion of our program to local parents has been entirely through our school Facebook group and word of mouth. We have plans for on-street recruiting via chalk, a pamphlet table, and flyers around the neighbourhood. Neither our school administration nor our school council has been willing to announce our program via email to the school population until they receive clarity from the school board; you might encounter something similar at your school.

To connect with program participants, we started a Facebook group. This is where we post reminders and we also field questions and just generally encourage our participants. We also have a dedicated email account where individuals (program participants and interested groups) can connect with us. Multiple team members help manage Facebook and email communications.