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All Students and School-Based Employees Returning to In-Person Learning on January 24 Must Bring Negative Covid-19 Test, Education Says

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The V.I. Dept. of Education has announced that with guidance from the V.I. Dept. of Health, D.O.E. is requiring all students attending the territory's public schools and school-based employees to undergo Covid-19 testing in advance of the return to in-person learning on Jan. 24.

The Department of Health will begin testing groups of students and school-based staff on Jan. 19, with both the vaccinated and unvaccinated required to be tested, according to the release. A testing schedule will be emailed to students and employees. Parents may download the Covid-19 testing consent form by visiting www.vide.vi and clicking on the "Covid-19 Forms" tab at the top of the page. Covid-19 testing is free of charge.

The decision was made to implement mass testing due to the territory's high positivity rate (currently 16 percent), increased Covid-19 hospitalizations territory-wide (currently 25), and an increased number of positive cases among D.O.E. school-based employees, according to Education.

D.O.E. said it began Covid-19 testing of its School Food Authority workers, custodians, and monitors during the week of Jan. 10-14. Employees in these categories who did not test will be required to test in the upcoming round.

“The Department of Education is committed to ensuring the health and safety of students and staff as we continue to respond to the coronavirus pandemic,” said Education Commissioner Racquel Berry-Benjamin. “We ask that you commit to doing your part to keep the V.I. Dept. of Education safe.”

According to the release, students ages five and older, and employees who wish to take the Covid-19 vaccine, may visit the community vaccination site on the island on which they reside.

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