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# 500 Students Being Tested After Covid Outbreak at Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School Leads to Temporary Shutdown

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## **Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School.**

Approximately ten weeks after schools reopened for in-person classes, the Department of Health has reported an outbreak of Covid-19 at a school in St. Thomas.

“There is currently an outbreak of Covid-19 at the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School. The school was closed last week Friday as the outbreak was identified. All faculty and staff were tested on Friday,” said Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion.

Face-to-face classes for students in public schools resumed on January 24.

She further disclosed that approximately 500 students were scheduled to be tested today with the help of nursing assistant staff from eight other schools.

“We found four at first, but we also had a high number of close contacts and that was the reason we closed the school right away,” Ms. Encarnacion said Monday during the Bryan administration's weekly press briefing.

A notice on the Department of Education's Facebook page said that all students will be tested at the school via drive-through or walk-up. The testing is being conducted by D.O.H. and the D.O.E, however, parents may choose to test their children at a private lab at their own expense.

Students and staff who tested negative for Covid-19 will return to in-person learning by showing their negative test results on Tuesday, while students and staff who tested positive must remain at home for 10 days.

“All positives are being instructed to self-isolate and contact tracing is being done for all positives and close contacts, and they are going to be encouraged to quarantine to prevent further spread within the community,” Ms. Encarnacion said. She said because the matter was developing, details remained fluid.

Ms. Encarnacion is also urging residents to take the Covid-19 vaccine and booster shots, stating that the pandemic is not over despite the lifting of restrictions. The encouragement is not only for people who carry themselves to the vaccination sites across the territory, but also for those who are homebound.

“When making an appointment for homebound services...the Department of Health will bring the vaccine to the person. Our highest priority remains to get each of you vaccinated and boosted,” she said while reiterating that the Department of Health's antibodies medical therapeutic program remains active.

The health commissioner also said that the territory has joined the National Test and Treat Program. It is a federal initiative that allows testing sites access to Covid-19 oral antivirals for the rapid start of treatment upon diagnosis

“The Department of Health has enrolled and advocated antivirals to the long-term residential facilities, the Bureau of Corrections, and the emergency departments... If you are diagnosed within those settings, your treatment will not be delayed,” she said.