



Knowledge that will change your world

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 10, 2020

To: State Finance Director

From: Bob Phillips, Executive Director, GuideSafe™ Testing

Re: Testing for Alabama and GuideSafe™ Program Progress Report as of August 31, 2020

The GuideSafe™ Testing program provided “entry” testing services to students around the state throughout the month of August.

Our team has created a robust and effective structure to ensure the myriad projects and action items related to this complex project stay on track. We have a daily meeting at 7 or 7:30 to address progress on activities and identify solutions to the primary concerns of the day ahead. There is also a call at the end of each day with System leadership to facilitate any needed high-level decision making.

For the majority of the month, we operated the 13 geographically distributed test collection sites around the state 7 days per week. All 13 sites were open through August 24, with 5 staying open through the 26th and one operating until August 31. During the month, approximately 64,000 students registered for and were tested at one of the collection sites. There were 3-4 days in mid-August where almost every available appointment slot was taken (95-98%+ attendance rates). For all other testing dates, there were available appointment slots at each location each day, so there weren't students unable to participate due to lack of access. We did learn that many students chose to be tested outside of the program (with their personal physician, for example).

Though not specifically designed for a centralized program supporting multiple entities, the informatics platform for registration and scheduling has been effective as we've adapted it. We meet every day with the vendor representatives to troubleshoot and address new product functionality.

Our test collection centers have been noted by participants to be efficient, effective, and professional as they processed large numbers of individuals per day. The logistics staff operating the sites have collaborated well with students, school points of contact, and others involved.

In August, we also deployed a second testing methodology involving pre-made testing kits that can be mailed directly to individuals' homes. Our use of this methodology was directed primarily to out of state students or those with very early return dates that couldn't be

accommodated as we stood up our collection site network. Though there were some operational challenges with this process (shipping delays, registration issues from students, etc.), we did complete testing for over 9,000 students using this method.

The UAB Department of Pathology rapidly ramped up their testing capacity delivering thousands of results per day, despite the challenges of integrating multiple IT platforms and tools and working in very tight quarters.

As the program progressed through August, there were weekly press conferences to provide updates to local media. In addition, the UAB marketing and PR staff coordinated multiple weekly newsletters and an additional weekly “testing information zoom call” with school representatives. Also, our communications team developed multiple communications channels about both testing and the “suite” of other GuideSafe™ tools, such as Health Check, the event passport, and the exposure notification app. Those communication plans included development of collateral material for use by partner schools, social media campaigns, and other traditional media, like billboards.

GuideSafe™ testing also had a chance to meet with and provide program updates for various Stakeholder groups, including the GuideSafe™ Testing Steering Committee, University of Alabama system leadership, Health Education Partnership (affinity group for 4 year public universities), and the AAICU (affinity group for 4 year private schools). These meetings offered an opportunity to highlight program successes and solicit input for improvements.

There were many lessons learned during entry testing that began to be incorporated into the planning for sentinel testing that began at the end of August (sentinel testing has begun on a number of campuses here in September). The program brought on additional staffing onboard to assist in the implementation of sentinel testing, given the increased number of locations and complexity. Planning for sentinel testing consumed much of the end of August and we believe that planning work will bear fruit throughout the rest of the fall as we implement the Sentinel testing’s routine testing cadence. The investments in time and money to build our infrastructure in July and August will support our program throughout the fall.