



Knowledge that will change your world

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** June 11, 2021

**To:** State Finance Director

**From:** Bob Phillips, Executive Director, GuideSafe™ Testing

**Re:** GuideSafe™ Testing Program Summary

In April 2020, Dr. Selwyn Vickers and his colleagues at the UAB School of Medicine met with Dr. Scott Harris and others from the Alabama Department of Public Health to propose the initiation of what would become GuideSafe™ Testing, a program to provide COVID-19 testing services to college students in Alabama. Ultimately, approximately \$29.9 million in CARES Act funding was provided by the State of Alabama to develop and operate a COVID-19 testing network, along with an additional \$7.1 million for the GuideSafe™ Tools initiative led by Dr. Sue Feldman. An advisory panel of educational, political, and healthcare leaders in the state was developed and Dr. Mike Saag provided leadership as chairman. I was asked to join the team at the beginning of July to function as Executive Director.

In June and July 2020, the GuideSafe™ team conducted dozens of informational Zoom meetings with college and university representatives to discuss components of GuideSafe™ Testing, as well as the GuideSafe™ Tools HealthCheck symptom tracker/event passport app. Simultaneously, the team—consisting of our consulting partners (Partners in Performance America), our operations and logistics partners (Bruno Event Team), and members of the UAB Hospital laboratory staff and the UAB School of Medicine—initiated a very accelerated process of establishing an “entry” COVID-19 testing program for asymptomatic students who’d be returning in the fall to campus at colleges and universities throughout the state. The initial goal was to make PCR testing available to all students at participating schools on or around their return to campus.

The team sourced PCR testing services from the UAB Department of Pathology, using a testing “pooling” methodology developed by Dr. Sixto Leal and his colleagues. This methodology created testing capacity of thousands of tests per day. In addition, we partnered with the laboratory at the University of South Alabama’s University Hospital in Mobile, setting up a similar pooling process there. This allowed us to increase testing capacity and better serve schools in the southern part of the state.

The team also collaborated with a number of IT and informatics partners. Ovation provided the lab system backbone for test processing and resulting. Verily provided an informatics platform to handle participant registration, communication, scheduling, and results reporting. Everlywell offered a home

testing option for out-of-state students and individuals with unusual return to school requirements, which were mailed directly to a contracted lab.

During the entry phase, GuideSafe™ operated 14 geographically distributed test collection locations on college campuses throughout the state. These sites were selected based on facilities that could accommodate high numbers of test volumes and ensuring that a testing site was located within a one hour drive of anyone living in Alabama. During the entry phase, GuideSafe™ conducted approximately 75,000 tests in support of the schools' various campus safety protocols. Testing results data were made confidentially available on a daily basis to school contacts through a secure Box data folder. In addition to being tested through our program, many students chose to be tested at their personal physician offices, school testing centers, or other testing sites.

Once the fall semester had begun (around Labor Day), our program pivoted to “sentinel” testing, in which we set up test collection sites one to four days per week on participating campuses. A percentage of participating students, faculty, and staff were randomly selected to be tested each week, with the goal of providing the schools insight into COVID prevalence on their campus. This, in turn, allowed the school to take protective measures such as isolating students with “positive” results and quarantining close contacts of those students to help reduce additional spread.

At the end of the fall semester, the team worked with schools to assess fall performance and plan adjustments for the return of students after the holidays. As students returned, our program provided limited “return” testing to certain high-risk groups, such as students living in dormitories. Once students had fully returned and classes resumed for the spring semester, we returned to “sentinel” testing.

To encourage participation, our team developed a variety of public relations and marketing materials that could be adapted and personalized for each school. The UAB Marketing and Public Relations staff partnered with Big Communications to develop email templates, social media collateral, and testing incentives, such as t-shirts and gift cards. We conducted a number of press conferences with local media outlets to provide updates on the program, as well. During the second half of the spring semester, we also initiated a weekly gift card giveaway process to randomly selected individuals who had completed a test that week. This helped maintain interest and volume levels as COVID numbers began to decline around the state and a level of “test fatigue” began to be noticed.

As each school's spring semester came to an end in late April and early May, our program coordinated final testing dates, then “took down” our testing locations at participating schools. Our final day of test collection was on May 24, 2021. Members of the Allegro Partners and Visibility Partners consulting groups, who had served as liaisons for each campus throughout the school year, addressed final questions and coordinated access to final testing data for each institution.

**Table A** (included separately) provides some institution-specific testing details for 52 institutions that participated in the program at some level.

As reflected in **Table B** (also included separately), GuideSafe™ Testing ultimately collected and processed **158,428** tests through our Verily informatics platform and the laboratories at UAB and USA.

We completed an additional **13,698** tests through our partner, Everlywell. Combined, we provided results for **172,126 tests** of asymptomatic individuals over the duration of the GuideSafe™ Testing program (between July 2020 and May 2021). Among these tests, there were **1,258 positive results**, for a positive prevalence of **0.73%** over the course of the program.

Included separately, please also find a **Summary Financial Report** for the program. As you will note in the report, the GuideSafe™ Testing program was provided a CARES Act-funded program budget of **\$29,873,575** by the Alabama State Department of Finance. Over the course of the 2020-2021 school year, the program utilized **\$28,565,955** of these funds to operate our testing program, leaving **\$1,306,620** in unutilized funds.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to provide these testing services on behalf of the colleges and universities in the State of Alabama.