



Knowledge that will change your world

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 6, 2020

To: State Finance Director

From: Bob Phillips, Executive Director, GuideSafe™ Testing

Re: Testing for Alabama and GuideSafe™ Program Progress Report as of September 30, 2020

The GuideSafe™ Testing program transitioned to the provision of “sentinel” testing services to students, faculty, and staff at higher education institutions around the state during September.

After an initial pilot involving eight schools during late August and the first week of September, we have steadily increased the number of campuses involved in testing each week, from eleven schools the first full week to a current list of over forty-four institutions. Schools participating in sentinel testing include four-year public and private schools, as well as over twenty two-year colleges.

Sentinel testing involves randomly selecting an asymptomatic, representative sample of members of the campus community to be tested each week. Enrollment and creation of an account in our informatics system is required for participation. Many students created accounts during the entry testing phase. Those who were tested outside of the GuideSafe™ program during the entry phase, as well as faculty and staff who didn’t participate in entry testing, have been encouraged by their school to enroll. Each week, a list of individuals is generated for each school and those individuals receive a testing invitation via email.

Entry testing primarily involved students scheduling tests ahead of their return to campus at thirteen testing locations located throughout the state. For sentinel testing, our logistics team has partnered with each school to identify and outfit an on-campus testing location. Depending on the school’s size and number of students, there may be anywhere from one to three testing days per week.

Samples are handled as they were during entry testing, with the logistics team transporting samples to the laboratory each evening for processing. Results are then reported to individuals and appropriate school officials, with the intent of identifying trends related to positive rates among school populations.

We have continued to work with University of South Alabama Medical Center laboratory and will begin sending samples collected at schools in the southern half of the state there for processing in October.

There are members of the GuideSafe™ Testing team assigned as points of contact for each school in the state to help with implementation and process issues. Additionally, we've scheduled weekly "IT Office Hours" Zoom meetings where the schools' data management questions can be answered by GuideSafe™ Testing IT team. We also have regularly held similar Zoom meetings oriented to the schools' marketing and communications staffs in which we review the "Communications Toolkit," which includes email templates, social media strategies, branding materials, etc. with the goal of improving campus awareness of the value of sentinel testing and the need to enroll and participate.

We are also continuing to develop new tools/methods for helping schools respond to potential COVID-19 "hotspots" on campus, including access to a team of epidemiologists.

As schools refine their campus calendars for the end of the fall semester, we also are beginning discussions about continued benefit of sentinel testing services in the spring semester.