

DATE: June 15, 2020
TO: Illinois High School Equivalency Vendors
Illinois High School Equivalency (HSE) Testing Centers
Regional Offices of Education Superintendents
FROM: Dr. Brian Durham, Executive Director
Jennifer K. Foster, Deputy Executive Director and State Administrator for HSE Testing
SUBJECT: Phase 3: Reopening of HSE Testing Centers

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 160 Illinois High School Equivalency (HSE) Testing Centers throughout the state have been closed since March 30, 2020. This closure has resulted in the lack of access to testing for thousands of test candidates throughout the state. The lack of HSE testing in Illinois prevents more than 1.2 million individuals, without a high school diploma, the opportunity to obtain a high school equivalency certificate and transition to postsecondary education or training, and/or enter employment. Without testing, this challenge could prevent potential test candidates from making the transition to education/training and employment in high demand occupations.

Therefore, the ICCB will reopen testing centers, effective June 15, 2020, in a limited testing capacity observing and abiding by the policies of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) relative to health and safety including social distancing, wearing masks and other protective gear, as well as disinfecting and sanitation. To reopen testing facilities in Illinois, the following observances must take place:

- 1) Any test candidate wanting to take their high school equivalency test should be allowed to test at an Illinois Testing Center.
- 2) The assumption is that each testing center will observe all IDPH policies and procedures when reopening testing centers.
- 3) No testing center will be required to open their testing center if they cannot abide or don't have the capacity to adhere to the policies and procedures set forth by the IDPH.
- 4) No testing center should allow walk-in candidates for any testing reason. All test candidates must register for testing through the appropriate vendor online registration site. If a testing center provides access to online registration at their facility, this should be by appointment only.
- 5) Testing centers are encouraged with testing proctors to develop the appropriate reopening protocols to implement this approach.
- 6) Consistent with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Guidelines, institutions shall:
 - a. Provide staff and proctors with appropriate face coverings and require them to wear face coverings throughout the testing process and when unable to maintain a six-foot social distance.
 - b. Require test candidates to wear appropriate face coverings and require that these are worn throughout the testing process. Test candidates must provide their own face coverings. However, test centers may provide face coverings if they have the means to do so.

- c. Ensure staff, proctors and test candidates comply with social distancing requirements pursuant to IDPH Guidelines, including by maintaining six-foot social distancing at all times and convening in groups of 10 or fewer. Seating should be readjusted to maintain social distancing (minimum of six feet between workspaces). This may require testing centers to reduce the test capacity or the number of testing candidates in a testing session.
 - d. Designating with signage, tape, or by other means, six-foot spacing for staff, proctors and test candidates in order to promote compliance with social distancing guidelines.
 - e. Make available hand sanitizer and sanitizing products readily available for test candidates, proctors and staff. Test candidates, staff and proctors must practice hand hygiene prior to using any common spaces or materials and again after completion of their work.
 - f. Conduct in-person health screenings safely and respectfully, in accordance with IDPH Guidelines available at:

<https://dceocovid19resources.com/assets/Restore-Illinois/checklists3/screening.pdf>
 - i. If conducting daily temperature checks, a faculty member or student that presents a temperature greater than 100.4 should not be allowed admittance to the testing facility and should be encouraged to seek medical care.
 - ii. If automated monitoring is implemented, there must be a mechanism for notification of symptoms and the need for action.
 - g. Implement separate testing hours for vulnerable test candidates. These testing sessions must be conducted within testing vendor guidelines.
 - h. Clean all common high touch areas and materials touched by staff, proctors and test candidates between testing sessions.
 - i. Follow all appropriate IDPH and Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines to minimize in-person interaction and maximize safety protocols. Testing centers must also abide by testing vendors protocols and guidance.
- 7) Testing candidates should be asked to pull down the facial covering/mask once – from a minimum of 6 foot distance – to allow the test center staff member completing check-in to compare the candidate to their photo ID. Face covering and other protective coverings may be inspected in accordance with testing vendor guidelines to ensure appropriate testing protocols are followed.
- 8) Testing candidates should be permitted to wear disposable gloves during testing, but these gloves must be inspected both before and after the exams and disposed in front of the proctor upon completion of the test.
- 9) Testing centers are responsible for seeking any necessary relief from the exam vendors are encouraged to work directly with their respective vendor organizations.
- 10) All approved accommodations and services per Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act still apply and must be in compliance with test vendor policies and procedures.