

## DETECT Schools Study Information Sheet for PARENTS/STUDENTS

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian

<b>Project title</b>	DETECT Schools Study: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 in Western Australian Schools
<b>Name of Telethon Kids Institute Researchers</b>	Professor Peter Gething Associate Professor Asha Bowen Associate Professor Chris Blyth Professor Donna Cross Professor Juli Coffin
<b>WA Government Partners</b>	Department of Health Department of Education

**Your child is invited to take part in a new research project called the  
“DETECT Schools Study: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 in Western Australian Schools”**

This Information Sheet tells you about the research project. It explains the processes involved with taking part. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want your child to take part in the research. We also encourage you to review this information with your child, if you believe they will also be able to understand it, so that you can also ask them and decide together whether they want to participate.

### **What is COVID-19?**

A new virus called SARS-CoV-2 emerged in China in late 2019 and has now spread around the world in a pandemic. The illness that this virus causes has been called COVID-19. Most people with COVID-19 have mild flu like symptoms. Some will have no symptoms or signs of illness at all. This study is about testing healthy students and staff at school in WA to see if we can find anyone with COVID-19.

### **What is the purpose of this project?**

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the way we live. With the rates of COVID-19 in Western Australia (WA) remaining low, we are at a critical point where the Government is working hard on how to get things back to normal, as safely and as quickly, as we can.

One thing we don't know much about, is the rates of COVID-19 in those who may not have any symptoms (asymptomatic). As part of a larger community study to determine the occurrence of COVID-19 in people without symptoms in WA, the WA Education and Health Departments, in partnership with Telethon Kids Institute, are undertaking a research study in schools called DETECT. The DETECT study will help us answer three main questions:

1. Is there any undetected COVID-19 infection in school students and staff (without symptoms)?
2. Do students and staff at schools play a role in spreading COVID-19, if we find it?
3. How are school staff, students, and their families coping during this challenging time? Is their wellbeing impacted?

We are asking you to help us answer these questions.

WA has had limited evidence of community spread of COVID-19 since the pandemic commenced. Although this may change over the course of the study as social distancing regulations change, schools are considered low-risk environments for transmission of COVID-19. It is hoped the DETECT



Schools Study will assist in making an even stronger evidence-base for the WA (and Australian) Government to make the best policy decisions they can, and to provide the support to schools and families that they need. The study has three projects:

**Project 1: COVID-19 Testing in those without symptoms (asymptomatic)** - A random sample of up to 150 consenting staff and students from each of the 40 schools will be tested (throat/nose swab) for COVID-19 to find out if there is any undetected infection in the school population. This testing will be completed at each school, every month, for three to six months in total. This will give us immediate evidence about the level of asymptomatic infection in our schools, so we can help WA (and Australia) confirm that it is safe to keep schools open if we find no evidence of COVID-19.

**Project 2: Tracking Transmission in Schools** - If we do find that someone in the school has COVID-19, in addition to standard Public Health and Department of Education responses, we will do more testing with people they are in close contact with. Any close contacts of the person with COVID-19 (classmates, staff etc) will be invited to do two COVID-19 tests across two weeks, (whether they have symptoms or not), and keep a daily symptom diary. By doing more testing, we can find out more about how COVID-19 spreads in schools, and how we can prevent that in the future.

**Project 3: Wellbeing survey** - Staff, parents and students of various ages will receive online surveys to complete, in order to gain a better understanding of the impact COVID-19 is having right now on the school community's physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

**This is an invitation for your child(ren) to take part in Project 1 and Project 2 of the DETECT Schools Study – COVID-19 Testing in those WITHOUT SYMPTOMS (asymptomatic), and Tracking Transmission in Schools**

Your child has been invited to take part because they attend one of the 40 public schools, education support services and/or residential colleges participating in this part of the project. This is your choice. Your child's school is sharing this information with you.

**What does asymptomatic COVID-19 mean?**

Most people who get COVID-19 show symptoms that they are ill e.g. fever, a sore throat, cough and tiredness. However, some studies and reports are showing that a few people are **getting COVID-19 without any symptoms or signs of illness** - this is what it means to have asymptomatic COVID-19. It means you test positive to the COVID-19 virus, but you have no symptoms/signs of illness, not even feeling like you have a cold.

It is difficult to know how many people may have asymptomatic COVID-19, and how it might be spreading between people, because people who have COVID-19 without symptoms, won't have a reason go to the doctor or get tested.

**Could I or my child (ren) have asymptomatic COVID-19?**

In WA, there is very little evidence at the moment of COVID-19 spreading between people. This means that we think the likelihood of a positive test is very low whether you have symptoms or not. The chance of having a positive test when you do have symptoms is slightly higher than when you don't have any symptoms. Testing asymptomatic people (including children), will help us better understand how COVID-19 is affecting everyone in WA not just those who have symptoms and have been tested. It is important that children with symptoms of a viral illness (runny nose, fever, cough, sore throat) do not attend school as per the Department of Education policy.

### **What does the testing (Project 1) involve?**

With your consent, we will:

1. Take a throat and nasal swab for the COVID-19 test. This means taking a throat swab followed by a nose swab (using the same swab) which looks like a long, fluffy cotton bud. It is a gentle procedure which causes minimal discomfort. It is NOT a swab process that is inserted deeply through the nose all the way to the back of the throat (“nasopharyngeal swab”) that has been used for symptomatic (with symptoms) COVID-19 testing in COVID clinics. It is less invasive. For the throat swab, it may tickle the back of the throat, and might make the child feel like gagging but this passes very quickly. We have done this throat swab with thousands of children (aged 3-17 years old) in other studies. For the nose swab, it has been described by a 9-year-old as feeling like “the tickle of a hairy caterpillar in my nose”, and sometimes makes your eyes water briefly during the swabbing procedure

We have made a **video** to show you the swab process that you can watch via this link [https://youtu.be/hD\\_9rlGuxcM](https://youtu.be/hD_9rlGuxcM)

2. If your child does the testing, with your permission, they may also take a survey that asks about how they found the testing process. This is part of the wellbeing surveys of the DETECT Schools Study (part 3 described on page 1).

### **This information form states that 150 selected students and school staff will get tested. Will my child get tested if we decide to take part in the study?**

Even if you say yes to taking part in the study, your child(ren) may not be selected to do the COVID-19 testing. At each monthly visit to your school, we will randomly select (like flipping a coin) 150 students and staff to take part in the testing which means having a throat/nose swab collected. This means that each month there will be a different group of students/staff selected to participate in the study and have a throat/nose swab collected. Your child may or may not get selected each time. After each visit to the school, your school will tell you if your child was tested.

### **How long will the testing take?**

About 5 minutes per child (about three minutes to check consent and about two minutes for the throat/nose swab to be collected). We might also do the testing with some school staff first, so we can show children (especially kindy and pre-primary), what it's like.

### **Who will do the testing?**

Clinical staff members employed by the Department of Health (for example nurses), who have been appropriately trained on how to do the swabs will do the testing.

The staff taking the swabs will also wear the Department of Health's recommended personal protective equipment – an apron, gloves, mask, and eye protection, and wash their hands with alcohol gel before and after seeing each child. These staff members will also have valid Working with Children's Checks.

There will also be a school staff member available during testing days to help the study staff members correctly identify children, take them in and out of class, and connect them with any additional support if needed, as per the school's standard processes.

### **How will I know if my child tested positive for COVID-19?**

PathWest laboratories will process the swabs to see if they have the COVID-19 virus. We expect results will become available 24-72 hours onwards from testing, depending on how many tests PathWest must complete. If your child's test is negative, you will be notified by SMS text message. If your child's test is positive, you, the Telethon Kids researchers, your school principal/staff, and the health department will all be notified. This information will not be shared to anyone else (including other students or school staff) and this confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study.

**What will happen if my child has a positive COVID-19 test result?**

You will be contacted by a staff member from the Health Department, who will help you know what to do. The Health Department will also ask lots of questions about possible symptoms. This will include isolating your child for 14 days. Any close contacts of your child will also be asked to isolate for 14 days and will get tested for COVID-19 two times (if they are part of Part 2) and be asked to keep a diary of any symptoms.

**What will happen if any child or school staff has a positive COVID-19 test result?**

They will also need to follow the isolation recommendations from the Health Department described above. As per Health Department recommendations, the school will also close and undergo cleaning as per their standard processes. We would also start Part 2 of the study (see below) for anyone who is a close contact of the child/school staff person who tested positive.

**What does the tracking transmission (Part 2) involve?**

This means we are asking your permission to participate in further testing for your child if a child or staff member found to have COVID-19, is considered to be a close contact of your child. Further testing would mean your child having two COVID-19 swab tests (at home or in a healthcare setting), whether they have symptoms or not. A clinical staff member employed by the Department of Health, or a clinical research staff member employed by Telethon Kids Institute would contact you (via phone call) to confirm your permission verbally and arrange the testing. We would also ask you to help keep a daily symptom diary for two weeks.

This also means we are asking your permission for sharing of your personal information between Department of Health and Telethon Kids, if your child is identified as a close contact of the person with COVID-19, so that we can follow up with you for the extra testing. By completing this testing, you will find out whether your child gets COVID-19 after someone close to them has had it. It helps us better understand how COVID-19 is spreading.

**Does my child(ren) have to take part in this research project?**

No. Taking part in any research is voluntary. If you don't want your child to participate, they don't have to. If you decide they can take part and later change your mind and want to stop, you can also withdraw your child from the research study at any stage – just contact your school to let them know. Your child can also choose to withdraw, or not do the testing on the day, they just need to tell us. We will ask all children whether they want to take part in testing, and we will also stop at any point, if we feel they are distressed by the process.

Your decision to either participate or not participate in this research project will not affect your child's education, or your or their relationship with their teacher(s), or with the school, or with the health department, or with the Telethon Kids Institute.

**Is there anyone who can't take part in the study?**

If your child has any of the below, we are asking they do NOT take part:

- Recurrent nose bleeds (frequency of more than one nosebleed per week) - in case the nose swab might make their nose bleed
- Recurrent vomiting – in case the throat swab might cause them to vomit
- Problem with tonsils and planned to have them removed soon – in case the throat swab might irritate their throat
- Easily stressed about medical procedures – as the swab process may cause anxiety

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

There may be no direct benefit. By taking part in this study, you are contributing to important information that will inform government decision making on managing COVID-19 and the safety of keeping schools open. If your child gets a COVID-19 test, you will know whether they test positive and may be able to prevent further spread to family, friends and the general community. If your child is found to be COVID-19 positive then this diagnosis may be earlier than if your child was not participating in this study and so you can watch your child closely for any symptoms and seek medical care earlier if you are concerned.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

We do not anticipate any significant risks to your child or yourself by participating in this study. Your child may feel like gagging when the throat swab test is done, may experience eye watering during the nasal swab (but both pass quickly) or they may feel more anxious about COVID-19 by taking part in this study. Schools will ensure the school nurse, school psychologist/counsellor, or a trained staff member is available if any student appears upset or distressed because of the testing. If your child suffers any distress or psychological injury as a result of this research project, you should contact your child's school as soon as possible. You will be assisted by the school with arranging appropriate support for your child.

### **What data will you collect about my child(ren)?**

We will collect information on your child's name, date of birth, gender, Indigenous status, school year group and classroom teacher. We will also ask you for your parent/legal guardian contact details.

### **How will you use that data and who can see it?**

This information is important to collect so that we can accurately identify your child during the testing, and to contact you quickly should we need to for any reason including to provide the test results directly to you. Only authorised staff will be able to see this data and we will keep it locked with restricted access. All electronic information will be kept on the secure Telethon Kids Institute server in a password protected online database that can only be accessed by authorised team members.

Research staff coordinating the study, and PathWest staff, will be able to view this data for all children. Stickers that contain all of this information will be produced to label the swab and PathWest form so that immediate notification with all relevant details can occur if there is a positive result and an SMS sent for a negative result. The school principal, a school staff member coordinating the study at each school, and the staff members doing COVID-19 testing, will only be able to see this data for children at schools they are involved with.

Sharing of this data between Department of Health and Telethon Kids will also be done so that if you are identified as a close contact in part 2 (tracking transmission), you are not asked for the same information twice.

However, when we analyse and report the study results, identifying information about your child and their school will be removed. A unique code will be assigned to each child in the study. Once the testing is completed, personal confidential data will be removed and put into a separate database (so it is no longer in the same database as the testing data), and only the unique identification code will be able to be used to re-identify the data if needed. Researchers analysing the data will not be able to see any confidential information. The HOGBEN number (please see information sheet about the survey for details) will be used to link survey results together and may be used to connect year groups at the same school with the testing results.

It is anticipated that the results of this research will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that your child and their school cannot be identified.

### **What happens when the research project ends?**

Every school will be sent a report of the overall findings to share with all families. Overall results will be used by the Departments of Education and Health to inform policy decisions and to provide appropriate support measures to schools.

### **What happens with the swab after you finish the research project?**

Usually the swab will be discarded after COVID-19 testing. With your consent, Telethon Kids would like to keep the swab to look for other bacteria and viruses that live inside throats and noses when we are feeling well. For example, with these samples, we could learn how common other respiratory viruses are circulating in our communities, further informing strategies to keep communities healthy. If you are happy for us to store the swab for future research, please tick the additional consent box on the consent form below. Samples will be permanently retained and analysed at the laboratories of the Telethon Kids Institute. The DETECT study will not release any of the data collected, including samples, for any other purpose outside of this study. If any further applications are made for data usage the DETECT study will refer this request to appropriate ethics

including WAAHEC. Declining storage means that the swab will be destroyed after COVID testing. Declining storage does not mean you cannot take part in this study.

### **What if you want to withdraw your child from this research project?**

If you do consent for your child to participate, you may withdraw them at any time. Please note that data already collected will not be destroyed after withdrawal unless you request this.

### **Who approved this project?**

All research in Australia involving humans is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this research project have been approved by the Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS) HREC and the Western Australian Aboriginal Human Ethics Committee (WAAHEC). This project will be conducted according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies. This project has also met the policy requirements of the Department of Education.

### **Further information and who to contact**

The person you may need to contact will depend on the nature of your query.

If you want any further information concerning this research or if you have any queries which may be related to involvement in the project, please contact the Telethon Kids Institute at [DETECT-SCHOOLS@telethonkids.org.au](mailto:DETECT-SCHOOLS@telethonkids.org.au)

If you require advice or support for your child's participation in the study at school, or advice or support for your child's education due to COVID-19, please contact your child's school principal.

If you have any concerns and/or complaints about the project, the way it is being conducted or your rights or child's rights as a research participant, and would like to speak to someone independent of the project, please contact. The Executive Director of Medical Services at Perth Children's Hospital, phone 6456 2222. Your concerns will be drawn to the attention of the Ethics Committee who is monitoring the study.

### **Next steps**

If you decide your child(ren) can take part in this study, please complete the consent form online.

If you decide you do not want your child(ren) to take part in the study, you do not need to do anything else.