

Appropriate Use of Medical Exemptions Guidance for Spring 2021 TCAP Assessments

1) Will this document be updated?

Yes. The department will compile questions and update the FAQ as needed each Friday.

2) What is a Medical Exemption (ME)?

Medical Exemptions (MEs) are an existing flexibility in the TCAP program. Outlined in the annual [Building Testing Coordinator Guide](#), the ME policy allows districts to exempt students with extraordinary circumstances from being included in annual assessment and accountability calculations if participation in the assessments is not possible, due to situations beyond the control of the student, school, or district. Historically, MEs have been used to account for students who are not tested (absent) during the assessment window due to hospitalization or other severe medical condition(s) that prevents them from participating safely within the entirety of the testing window.

3) What flexibilities will districts have in the spring 2021 testing window as it relates to medical exemptions and TCAP testing?

Districts are given significant flexibility during the spring Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) administration to create locally tailored assessment plans so that they can work within their local health protocols for keeping student and educator health a priority. This includes an expanded test administration window (moving from 5 to 9 weeks). Districts should administer summative assessments following guidelines from local and state health authorities.

4) What would an ideal testing plan or schedule look like?

An ideal assessment schedule allows for flexibility and make-up exams throughout the entire assessment window and the department has provided significant flexibility along with an extended testing window to accommodate local processes. This may include the department's recommendation to reserve two weeks at the end of the testing window for make-up testing.

5) Are students who receive an ME included in participation rate calculations?

No. Students who are marked with the Student Not Tested (SNT) code 4 (Medical Exemption) during the testing window are removed from calculations of participation, as they could not safely participate in testing through no fault of the student, school, or district.

6) Who qualifies for a Medical Exemption?

Local districts create ME policies based on guidance outlined in the [Building Testing Coordinator Guide](#).

While the state issues guidance on appropriate use of the ME for students who are “precluded from assessment participation due to a documented, severe medical circumstance,” it is up to districts make local determines on which students may qualify based on local review of requests and in alignment with accompanying supporting documentation.

7) Can Medical Exemptions be used for students quarantining due to COVID-19?

Medical Exemptions should be used only for students who are unable to test safely due to documented, severe medical conditions. Districts may exercise the significant flexibility afforded in the testing window (over 9 weeks) to create testing schedules that accommodate local needs or to reschedule students, as needed. Districts are required to maintain full documentation for medical exemptions, which may be audited at the discretion of the state.

8) What about a student who tests positive for COVID-19 or is “Presumed Positive” on the scheduled test date?

Students who have a documented positive test for COVID-19 and are unable to participate in assessments due to required self-isolation and/or illness should complete the assessment during a make-up exam during the testing window. Districts are encouraged to develop a testing plan that includes a two-week make-up period at the end of the nine-week test window to accommodate potential issues related to quarantine.

9) Do students learning remotely who have special needs automatically qualify for an ME?

Participation in remote instruction does not automatically qualify a student for a medical exemption. Students who are participating in remote instruction and have a documented severe medical condition (or have a family member at the residence of the student with a documented, severe medical condition), such as those who may be immunocompromised, may qualify for a medical exemption following the guidance outlined in the [Building Testing Coordinator Guide](#), if the district testing coordinator is unable to accommodate the testing environment needed to ensure student safety or the safety of the student’s family member with a medical condition. This must be documented by the district, and the district should maintain these records along with all supporting documentation.

Students with other diagnoses whose needs can be addressed with appropriate support throughout the school year should have a plan that includes the student’s needs during testing as well. Districts should follow accommodations available to students as outlined in these plans, as long as they do not compromise test security or the validity of the assessment. Districts are encouraged to use procedures for testing Homebound Students, outlined on page 27 of the [Building Testing Coordinator Guide](#), to meet individual student needs. If students are deemed to qualify, districts should complete the [Medical Exemption Form](#)

and keep on file with all appropriate supporting documentation (such as doctor's note or test results) and mark students with code SNT-4 in the [PearsonAccess^{next}](#) platform.

10) What procedures should be followed to issue a Medical Exemption?

Procedures for issuing MEs are outlined in the [Building Testing Coordinator Guide](#). The district testing coordinator (DTC) should retain all supporting documentation used to approve the medical exemption request must be permanently retained as is required for student health records, as described in the [Student Membership and Attendance Procedures Manual](#). This documentation must be made available in the event of a TDOE audit.

NOTE: There is not a requirement for TDOE to review individual student health records. As such, no student information or health records should be sent to the state. As outlined in the [Building Testing Coordinator Guide](#), districts must complete the [Medical Exemption Form](#) and keep on file with all appropriate supporting documentation (such as doctor's notes or medical records). For examples of circumstances which qualify for a ME, please refer to page 24-25 of the [Building Testing Coordinator Guide](#).

1. Use the [Medical Exemption Form](#) for students who are unable to participate in any TCAP assessments throughout the entire available testing window. The department will share expectations with DTCs for submitting summary documentation of these exemptions. Full documentation must be retained in the district for auditing purposes.
2. Follow the instructions in the Pearson Access User Guide, found in the Support Documents in the [PearsonAccess^{next}](#) platform to document the student as "Student Not Tested/Medically Exempt".