

Illinois Department of Public Health expands free COVID-19 testing to all K-12 public schools in Illinois help keep in-person learning

To help ensure schools can more safely resume in-person learning, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today announced it is expanding access to free COVID-19 testing to all K-12 public schools across Illinois outside of Chicago which received its own federal funding. Schools can choose to utilize the SHIELD Illinois saliva-based test developed by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), which is able to detect SARS-CoV-2 and its variants in symptomatic, pre-symptomatic, and asymptomatic individuals.

“In-person learning is a priority and we want to make sure students, teachers, and staff are able to return to the classroom as safely as possible,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “With the surge in COVID-19 cases and Delta variant, the sooner we know if someone has been infected, the quicker we can take action to prevent the spread of the virus to others. Not only is testing the best way to identify these cases, it can also help keep kids in school with a new Test-to-Stay protocol. We encourage all school districts to

take advantage of this free resource.”

As an alternative to quarantine, students and teachers who have been identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case now have the option of a Test-to-Stay protocol. Close contacts must be tested on days 1, 3, 5, and 7 after exposure. As long as close contacts remain negative, they are not required to quarantine. Close contacts are only eligible for Test-to-Stay if their school requires universal indoor masking of all individuals (age 2 and older), regardless of vaccination status, and both the close contact and infected individual were wearing masks at the time of exposure. IDPH encourages all schools to implement weekly testing of their unvaccinated students and staff. Schools that implement weekly testing will be prioritized for Test-to-Stay and outbreak testing when required.

Previously, SHIELD Illinois tests were offered to schools in predominantly low-income communities that have experienced high rates of COVID-19 infection at no-cost. Thanks to additional funding from the fed-



eral CARES Act and American Rescue Plan, IDPH has the ability to expand free testing to all K-12 schools outside of Chicago. The classification of low-income school districts is determined by the Illinois State Board of Education’s evidence-based funding criteria.

“From the onset of the pandemic, the University of Illinois System has been committed to helping the state and its people navigate and safely emerge from this crisis,” U of I System President Tim Killeen said. “The decision by IDPH to provide our test-and-trace system at no cost to many thousands of K-12 students will allow a return to in-person learning and the kinds of educational opportunities for these young people that mean a better tomorrow for us all. We are grateful to state health officials for their leadership through this difficult time, and their ongoing partnership with the U of I System.”

Schools looking for more information on testing or to sign up for SHIELD Illinois testing can contact Beth Heller at bheller@uillinois.edu

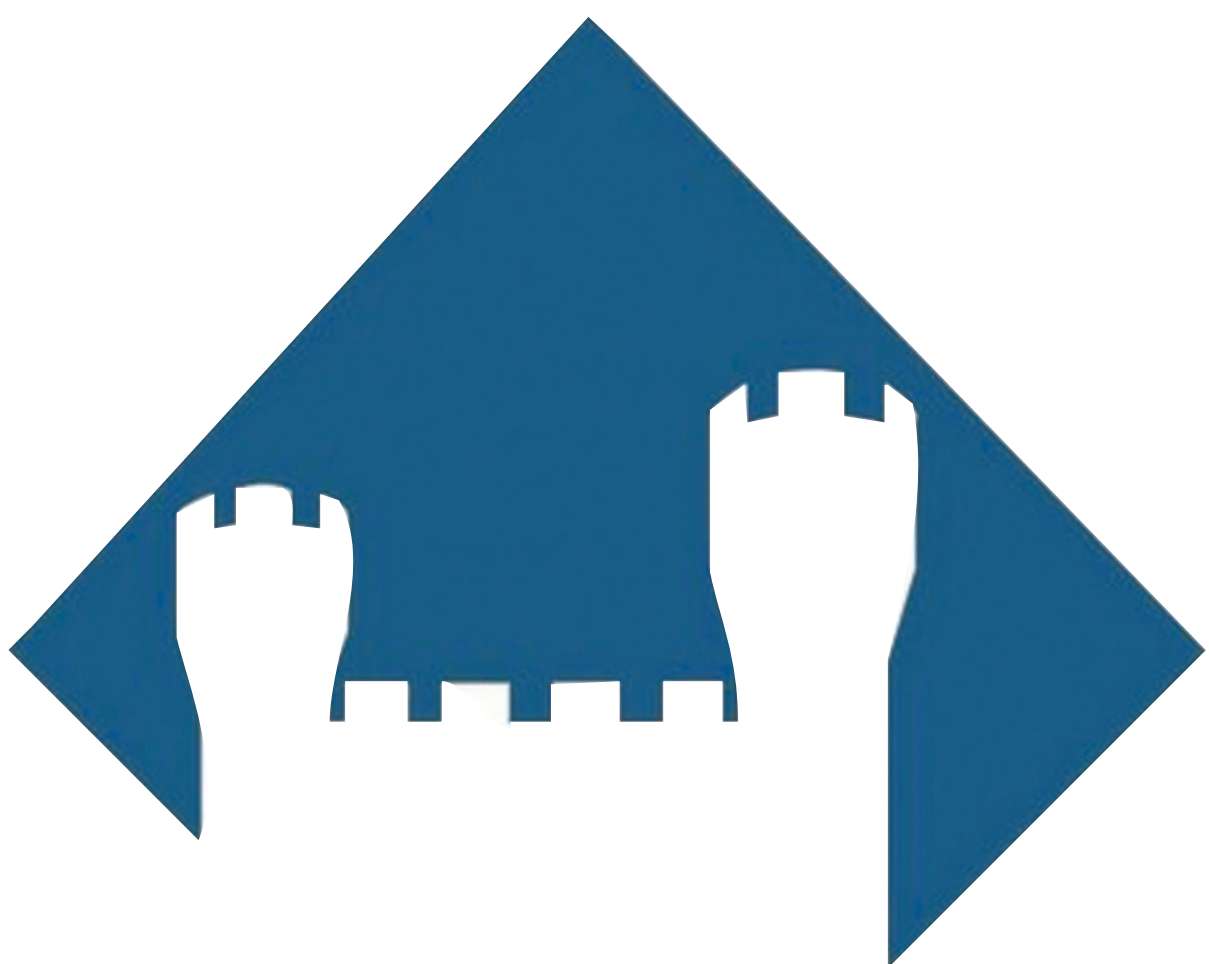
EIU extends support for adult workers, learners to Chicago’s suburbs

Updated program name reflects EIU’s commitment to dynamic learning

Eastern Illinois University will soon offer its Interdisciplinary Studies Degree Program in Romeoville, Illinois. The program’s presence in Romeoville will complement Eastern’s existing adult program offerings in Arlington Heights, Charleston, Champaign, and River Grove, Illinois.

Joliet Junior College’s (JJC’s) Romeoville campus, located at 1125 W. Romeo Road (135th Street), will serve as the hub for EIU’s Interdisciplinary Studies

Degree Program – formerly EIU’s B.A. in General Studies program. The program has been serving adult learners in Illinois since 1973, helping them meet their goal of earning a bachelor’s degree, and specifically targets those who have gained significant life and/or work experience who wish to further their careers and enhance their income potential. Students of the program have the opportunity to be evaluated for the learning they have engaged in outside the traditional classroom, in-



cluding on the job and in the military.

Dean of EIU’s College of Education Dr. Laretta Henderson says EIU hopes to further supplement offerings for adult workers and learners along the integral stretch of Illinois’ I-80 corridor.

“Academic and career support for adult learners continues to be a statewide need,” Henderson said. “EIU continues to be a positive state partner in that regard,

and is excited to create additional opportunities for personal and professional growth across the State. We know that every single person has a unique set of circumstances when trying to earn a degree, and EIU is committed to meeting students where they are to tailor our program to their busy lives.”

EIU’s website outlines integral benefits of its Interdisciplinary Studies Degree

Program, including its affordability, flexibility, and credit transferability. Classes in EIU’s Interdisciplinary Studies Degree Program can be offered online, on JJC’s Romeoville campus, and other various locations throughout the Chicagoland area. Additionally, EIU ranks extremely high in its alumni satisfaction rates, and more than 40 percent of its graduates choose to continue their education by enrolling in

graduate programs at EIU or at other universities.

For more information about EIU’s Interdisciplinary Studies Degree Program, visit <https://www.eiu.edu/bgs/>. For more information about EIU, or to learn more about its growing assortment of programs and services, visit the university’s website at www.eiu.edu, or call EIU’s public information office at (217) 581-7400.

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2021 CLIFF KAUFFMAN MEMORIAL TRACTOR DRIVE

Please join us in Arthur on Monday, September 6th for a 30-mile tractor drive in honor of Cliff. If you can’t join the drive, we will have lunch tickets available to be purchased separately.

All proceeds will be going to the Down Syndrome Diagnosis Network and Central IL Down Syndrome Organization to help support kids with Down syndrome.

For more information, please check out the event on Facebook or email us at cliffkauffmantractordrive@gmail.com.

Kim Weber at 217.259.7195 or Kyle Kauffman at 217.219.3826

Guest Editorial from Rosecrance President, CEO

By President and CEO David Gomel

Rethinking strength
 After nearly two years of living in a pandemic, many of us are feeling tired and stressed out. We have tried to maintain our lives through countless frustrating disruptions to our finances, activities, and natural support systems.

It’s a lot. These pressures have added extra burdens to our natural tendency to push ourselves past the breaking point in order to accomplish a goal. As a result, we’re seeing rates of mental health and substance use disorders on the rise, and I don’t see this trend changing soon.

Yet, in recent weeks we have seen very high profile examples of very well-known figures very publicly prioritizing their mental health. In some cases they have been vilified in the media – both traditional and social – but in



many others, they have been admired for their strength.

I’ve been encouraged by the refreshing voices of these celebrities and. It takes great courage and maturity to admit personal limitations

to the world. I admire their wise choices, even if they lost some short-term material fame.

If you’re struggling to hang in there, and it’s getting harder to paste on a smiling

face each day, please know that it is OK to not feel OK. It’s hard to admit that we’re not doing well, but that admission is often what allows us to find great inner strength. When we walk away from unrealistic expectations set by ourselves and others, we find freedom to heal and gain a new perspective on life.

I encourage you to learn from role models like these—athletes, celebrities, or even a friend—who prioritize self-care. None of us is a super-human, so pay attention to your physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health. For a quick self-evaluation, take a break if you find you are consistently hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or stressed.

And, don’t travel life alone. Find “fans in the stands” who will cheer you on your journey, and connect with mentors who can coach you.

Life’s waiting.