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## **North Shore Community Health Distributes Over 1,300 COVID-19 Testing Kits**

*NSCH Offers New Program Providing Free At-Home COVID-19 Test Kits for Vulnerable Populations*

SALEM, Mass. – Jan. 7, 2021 – North Shore Community Health (NSCH) through its outreach efforts is committed to its mission to serve the North Shore community outside of its own four walls. Following a round of vaccination clinics in 2021 at community partner locations, **NSCH continues to fight against the spread of COVID-19 with a new program offering the weekly distribution of at-home, rapid antigen COVID-19 testing kits** that are being provided through funding from the Health Resource Services Agency (HRSA).

**Area shelters and food pantries were the recipients of 1,135 tests** during the first round of deliveries this week, which began on Thursday, Jan. 6. The Open Door, a food resource center based in Gloucester, received 225 tests on Thursday. Serving more than 1000 people a week, the nonprofit will stagger the COVID tests for equitable distribution beginning Monday, Jan. 10.

"It's connections within our community, like this partnership between The Open Door and North Shore Community Health, that help bridge the gaps in access and reach some of the community's most vulnerable people," The Open Door President and CEO Julie LaFontaine said. "As we continue to weather this pandemic, we're pleased to take a role in facilitating better access to at-home testing so people can stay healthy this winter."

Kits were also made available to Lifebridge shelter and The Salem Food Pantry ; Citizen's Inn shelter and Haven from Hunger in Peabody; Action, Inc. in Gloucester and Beverly Bootstraps Food Pantry in Beverly.

The availability of these kits has come at a critical time. Getting timely testing for COVID-19 has never been more necessary as the Omicron virus is four times as transmissible as the Delta strand, making the spread of COVID-19 escalate rapidly.

NSCH recommends members of the community seek out a COVID-19 test if:

- You develop any symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild, or
- You are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
- Testing may also be advised if you are unvaccinated and have recently traveled out of Massachusetts, and you may consider using a self-test before joining indoor gatherings with others who are not in your household.
- Resources for testing: <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-testing> and up-to-date isolation and quarantine guidance visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>.

Since 1977, NSCH has been a primary source of healthcare for people of all ages and provides services regardless of ability to pay. The network of centers in Peabody, Salem, Gloucester and school-based health centers serves over 13,000 patients.

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