



## OSF HealthCare and the University of Illinois Introduce SHIELD CU

*The unique COVID-19 solution provides easy access to testing and resources.*

### For immediate release

**Contacts:** Libby Allison | Media Relations Coordinator, OSF HealthCare | (309) 308-5015

**(Champaign, IL | March 24, 2021)** - Through the invention of its own saliva-based PCR COVID-19 test and digital infrastructure, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has been able to keep its campus open to students and the COVID-19 positivity rate low during the pandemic. Now Illinois is teaming up with OSF HealthCare to offer that same saliva-based testing program to public schools, businesses and organizations, coupled with comprehensive clinical support for participants.

Introducing SHIELD CU, a unique community outreach program that offers COVID-19 testing and digital and clinical support to help Champaign County residents safely navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. SHIELD CU aims to reduce the community COVID-19 positivity rate and keep it low.

The initial participants of the SHIELD CU program will include students, teachers and staff at Urbana High School, Stratton Academy of the Arts, a public school in the Champaign Unit 4 School District, and employees of Champaign County, with plans to extend access to other Urbana-Champaign schools, underserved communities, local governments and businesses in the near future. Also included in the initial launch will be family and household members of University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign faculty, staff and students.

“The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is a really good partner for OSF in that we both serve the same broader community. With their great capacity in terms of research and education, coupled with our clinical distribution system, it is a great blending of the strengths of these two institutions,” remarked Bob Sehring, Chief Executive Officer, OSF HealthCare. “SHIELD CU is critically important for many aspects. Being able to have access to inexpensive tests that we can use across a broad spectrum of people in a community, especially those who are in the educational and small business fields which are vitally important to be able to fully reopen.”

“We are very proud to partner with OSF HealthCare to help everyone in our community find a safer and a healthier way through COVID-19,” said Robert Jones, Chancellor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. “We are excited to see the saliva-based test that we invented here at Illinois being used to help Champaign County.”

“If you think about our Mission to serve with the greatest care and love, it’s totally fitting that OSF has partnered with the University of Illinois to provide excellent guidance on testing and support resources that are necessary to handle this pandemic,” said John Vozenilek, M.D., chief medical officer, OSF HealthCare Innovation and Digital Health. “Our recovery is going to come to us through good access to testing and vaccination, and through best practices for keeping ourselves healthy.”

“It is incumbent upon the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to work with and serve as an anchor for our whole Champaign-Urbana community,” said Wanda E. Ward, Executive Associate Chancellor for Administration and University Relations. “The SHIELD CU partnership allows us to collaborate with various community groups to understand and meet the diverse needs of Champaign County residents.”

SHIELD CU participants will have access to the innovative Safer Community app, which will walk participants through the process. Safer Community is equipped to help participants find testing centers, learn the latest news about COVID-19 and its management, and receive their test results confidentially.

In the event of a positive COVID test result, information will be provided about next steps. Participants with positive COVID-19 tests will also gain automatic access to appropriate OSF HealthCare COVID-19 solutions. Coupled with the 24/7/365 convenience of OSF OnCall Urgent Care and in-person care at OSF Urgo, patients in the Champaign Urbana area have the ability to receive care when and where they need it – in person or virtually.

SHIELD CU uses the non-invasive saliva-based test invented at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The partnership allows OSF HealthCare to expand the testing platform into the surrounding communities of Champaign County.

Visit [osfhealthcare.org/shield-cu](https://osfhealthcare.org/shield-cu) for more about the local expansion of the SHIELD ecosystem. A digital form of this release, including downloadable photos, videos and interview clips is available on the OSF HealthCare Newsroom.

###