

Safe and Healthy Return to Campus

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Mandatory Guidance for College and University Campus Learning

Higher education institutions are an important component of Vermont's economy, workforce development system, culture, and vitality. The State of Vermont aims to make Vermont the safest place to go to college in the country during this public health emergency by establishing strict safety protocols that all institutions must follow. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students must comply with this guidance to protect the health and safety of themselves and the communities that house these institutions.

This guidance is in addition to – not a substitute – for the existing [Vermont Forward Guidance](#). In the event these two documents contradict one another, this document supersedes the [Vermont Forward Guidance](#). These guidelines are aimed to minimize the likelihood of an outbreak, and strictly following these guidelines will reduce both the likelihood of an outbreak and the severity of an outbreak. Institutions must follow both sets of guidance and operate any campus facilities that fall under the Vermont Forward Guidance in accordance with that guidance (for example, a gym or retail operation must comply with the corresponding Vermont Forward Guidance).

The State recognizes each institution is unique. Therefore, each institution shall adopt a written restart plan and keep it on file at the institution available for inspection by any employee, student, or State Agency upon request. These plans must, at a minimum, outline how they will comply with this guidance. This guidance serves as a minimum standard for safety. Institutions are encouraged to exceed these baseline recommendations.

This document was created in collaboration with the state's colleges and universities, the Vermont Department of Health, the Vermont Department of Public Service, the Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

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1) Decrease risk of individuals infected with COVID-19 from entering the campus through effective public health prevention

a. Health Safety Contract:

All students, faculty and staff shall sign an institution-specific health safety pledge that affirms the individual is familiar and willing to comply with the state's COVID-19 restrictions and the institution's health policies. Institutions shall enforce this contract, and immediately remove any student who violates major public safety components of the contract (such as quarantine requirements) from campus for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. Because of public health, existing judicial processes must err on the side of public health and remove a student from potentially further endangering the community by immediately removing the student from the campus. Faculty and staff who do not follow existing public health safety standards shall face immediate disciplinary action.

b. Arrival on Campus- Residential (overnight) Programming:

To protect the health and safety of students, faculty, staff and the community, all institutions must require those living in on-campus congregate settings to have proof of negative test results taken within 3 days prior to arrival on campus for residential (overnight) programming. A pre-arrival test is not needed if the student, faculty, or staff person has proof that they are fully vaccinated or has recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days. See section 1 e. for surveillance testing recommendations for both overnight and day programs.

c. Health Screenings:

All students must conduct a health screening prior to or upon campus arrival. This screening survey shall require an individual to verify that he or she has no symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, congestion or runny nose, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea. Institutions may create systems that work best for their unique operations, including conducting the survey electronically or over the phone, or posting signs around campus that remind people to stay home if they are experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms.

d. Visitors (Drop-off and Pick-up):

Students may have vaccinated guests with them on move-in day or move-out day. Unvaccinated guests must conduct a contactless drop off.

During a contactless drop off, guests may not enter any college facilities, must limit activities outside the car to

helping the student unload at the curb, and must avoid contact (within 6 feet of any individual) with anyone outside their household.

e. Testing:

In addition to testing protocols adopted in 1b. above, institutions *may* choose to implement surveillance testing for unvaccinated students and faculty. The cost of the testing protocol will be the responsibility of the institution or individual.

Students and faculty who are fully vaccinated or who have recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days, who display no symptoms associated with COVID-19, should not be included in the testing protocol.

f. Travel:

Students, faculty, staff, and visitors must follow the state's [travel guidelines](#) for any out-of-state or international travel.

g. On-campus events:

All on campus events must comply with the [state's event guidance](#).

2) Decrease transmission of COVID-19 among staff and students once on campus through effective public health measures.

a. **Face Coverings:**

Face coverings shall be worn indoors by all unvaccinated faculty, staff, students and visitors when in the presence of others and in public. When outdoors, and more than six feet apart from one another, masks are not required, but discretion must be exercised, and masks should be carried on the person in the event circumstances warrant their use.

b. **Health Screenings:**

Organizations must have policies (signage is considered adequate) in place to remind faculty and students to stay home if they have signs or symptoms of COVID-19. No symptomatic or COVID-19 positive students or faculty are allowed on site.

c. **Hand Hygiene:**

Students, faculty and staff must have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer. Handwashing or hand sanitization is required frequently.

d. **Cleaning and Disinfecting:**

All common spaces (when open to students, faculty, and staff) and equipment, including bathrooms, frequently touched surfaces and doors, tools and equipment, and vehicles must be cleaned regularly and, when possible, prior to transfer from one person to another, in accordance with CDC guidance.

e. **Physical Distancing:**

Unvaccinated students, faculty and staff should avoid prolonged close contact with others. 6 feet of distancing should be observed whenever possible.

f. **Dining Halls:**

Institutions shall follow [Universal Guidance](#) in the [Vermont Forward](#) plan for dining hall operations.

g. **Classrooms:**

Institutions shall follow [Universal Guidance](#) in the [Vermont Forward](#) plan for classroom operations.

h. Libraries:

Library operations should follow [Universal Guidance](#).

i. Athletics:

Institutions must follow all COVID-19 related health and safety guidance issued by the NCAA and the institutions' corresponding athletic conference guidance/rules. In addition, all collegiate sports teams traveling from or to Vermont must comply with the state's cross state travel guidance and quarantine requirements or have a testing, discipline, and student-athlete code of conduct in place and approved by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Institutions may also choose to follow the state's recreational sports guidance in lieu of a special athletic plan. That plan can be found at <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/vermont-forward/business-operations#specialized-guidance-9-1>.

A positive test from a member of the team community will require the school to consider canceling or delaying any imminent games, practices or travel for the entire team, and will require active consultation with the Vermont Department of Health.

Spectators: Vermont institutions must adhere to the state's current [gathering limits](#).

If in-person academic instruction is significantly restricted or eliminated because of an outbreak or case counts on campus, all sports activities must be paused until at least such time as in-person academic instruction is resumed.

j. Performing Arts:

Only performing arts (dance, singing, bands, etc.) that allow for social distancing should occur. Any performances shall comply with [Vermont Forward guidance on events](#).

k. Transportation:

Private charter buses and large multi-passenger vans are currently required to reduced density to allow for social distancing, unless they are transporting fully vaccinated groups or groups who usually have close contact, such as an athletic team or those from the same household. Cloth face coverings must be worn by unvaccinated individuals. Colleges shall comply with the above guidance when transporting students.

l. Protect At Risk Faculty, Staff and Students:

Implement strategies and policies to address the needs of faculty, staff and students who have underlying health issues. These include options, where necessary, for remote instruction, special living situations, and course reassignment.

3) Quickly identify individuals with COVID-19 and put containment procedures in place to minimize the impact on students, staff and education

a. Adequate Health Services:

Ensure your institution's health services is prepared with adequate personal protective equipment, access to testing capacity and a COVID coordination plan.

b. Isolation Procedures:

Institutions must have an isolation and quarantine plan in place in the event of a positive test and multiple exposures. This shall include having an arrangement in place to accommodate 5 percent of the college population in isolation and/or quarantine.

c. Campus Contingency Plans:

Institutions need to develop a procedure in the event the Department of Health determines there is an outbreak on campus, including considering for remote learning and quarantining portions or all of the campus.

d. Contact Tracing:

In the event of a positive case, the Vermont Department of Health will coordinate and conduct contact tracing.

e. Campus Evacuation:

Should an institution decide to evacuate a student, a group of students, or the entire campus due to COVID-19 cases or related quarantines, they shall only do so if the student is free of COVID-19 symptoms or successfully completed their quarantine and remain asymptomatic.

Students who are asymptomatic and not close contacts may immediately depart a campus and return home. These students may require quarantine upon return to their home state.

Students who require quarantine or are actively quarantining must stay on campus or in their off-campus housing for the duration of their quarantine (usually seven days followed by a negative PCR test). Students shall not leave their existing housing situation or return home to quarantine. The only exception to this rule is if an institution determines the student needs alternative housing to facilitate a quarantine. This policy reduces the likelihood of further spread outside the campus environment.

Students in isolation shall remain in isolation on campus or in their off-campus housing for the duration of isolation. Students shall not leave their existing housing situation or return home to isolate unless the institution

determines the student needs alternative housing to facilitate isolation. For most persons with COVID-19 illness, isolation and precautions can generally be discontinued 10 days *after symptom onset* and resolution of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and with improvement of other symptoms.