

# Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)

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The following guidance is intended to supplement the City of Chicago Phase IV Reopening Guidance for [Higher Education](#). Recommendations will change depending on local epidemiology which can be viewed on Chicago's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#). Updated guidance can be found [here](#).

## Considerations Prior to Student Arrival

Given the current high burden of COVID-19 among 18-29 year-olds, IHEs can consider the following options for all students returning to campus, particularly if traveling from [high-incidence states](#):

- 1) Quarantine for 2 weeks prior to coming to campus with a method of documenting adherence;
- 2) Quarantine for 2 weeks after arrival on campus;
- 3) Quarantine at home for 1 week prior to coming to campus with a method of documenting adherence, followed by:
  - a. A negative test recommended prior to coming to campus or shortly after arrival.
  - b. Quarantine for another week when arriving to Chicago/campus.

Parents who accompany students to campus from high-incidence states should quarantine during their stay, avoid all public settings, and limit exposures to others outside of the scheduled move-in time. Standard COVID-19 precautions as described in City of Chicago Phase IV Reopening Guidance should be maintained throughout the move-in time.

## Considerations for Entry Testing

Testing of all students, faculty, and staff for COVID-19 before allowing campus entry (entry testing) has not been systematically studied. It is unknown if entry testing in IHEs provides any additional reduction in person-to-person transmission of the virus beyond what would be expected with strict adherence to other infection preventive measures (e.g., social distancing, cloth face covering, hand washing, enhanced cleaning and disinfection) throughout the school year. **Therefore, CDC does not currently recommend entry testing of all returning students, faculty, and staff** (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/ihe-testing.html>).

Given the limitations of testing, a non-test based strategy is acceptable and would include quarantine options 1 and 2 listed above. If a testing approach is implemented, ensure short turn-around time of selected molecular assays, adequate staffing of student health services and the ability to refer students to convenient testing centers. An IHE point of contact should be selected to ensure reporting of positive tests and exposures to CDPH as below. Be aware that positive tests in asymptomatic individuals may not represent infectious virus but will still require a full public health response as described below, including enforcement of a 10-day isolation period.

## COVID-19 Reporting to CDPH

Under [Public Health Order No. 2020-2](#), IHEs must report to CDPH clusters of 2 or more cases of COVID-19 occurring within 14 calendar days of each other within 24 hours of identifying the cluster. **In order to protect the progress we've made in Chicago to reduce COVID-19 transmission, CDPH requests that IHEs also report individual cases in staff and students.** This does not replace notification through electronic laboratory reporting (ELR) or other healthcare provider reporting methods, but CDPH will be able to prioritize campus cases if notified through the confidential CDPH COVID-19 Online Case Report Form: <http://redcap.link/chicovidreport> (select the option Cluster of 2 or more cases OR single case in a congregate setting).

In order to complete the form, you will need the following information:

- Known campus exposure locations (dormitory, dining hall, classroom, other public setting)
- Total number of classrooms impacted
- Total number of students thought to be exposed
- Total number of staff thought to be exposed
- The positive individual's reported or observed symptom onset date
- The positive individual's last date on campus prior to isolation
- Length of isolation period recommended
- Date of student/staff notification (if completed by time of report)
- Additional optional information includes test date (if known), testing provider (if known).

## Campus Contact Tracing

Given your access to staff and student records, the need for prompt notification to close contacts, and the ability to distribute mass communication, your institution is best positioned to conduct initial contact tracing and notification. Support from CDPH can be requested by emailing [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov), but the below should be completed as soon as possible. CDPH will conduct additional follow-up of off-campus close contacts if necessary.

### Contact Tracing First Steps

- Above all, ensure the identity of the positive individual is protected.
- Interview the staff member or student by telephone as soon as you receive a verbal or written report that they tested positive. Questions to ask include:
  - Were they diagnosed through a test?
    - If so, what type (nose swab, mouth/oral swab, or blood test).
      - If they had only an antibody (blood test) and they have not had any symptoms, no further action is required.
    - What was the test date?
  - What was the last day they were on-campus? (Please confirm by checking classroom schedules, attendance files)
    - If symptoms, please ask the first day of their symptoms.
- Elicit close contacts (described below)
- Complete the CDPH Online COVID-19 Case Report Form: <http://redcap.link/chicovidreport> (select the option Cluster of 2 or more cases OR single case in a congregate setting)

## Determining Who is a Close Contact

- By definition, close contacts are individuals with whom the positive case was within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes starting 2 days prior to their first day of symptoms (or for asymptomatic individuals their test date) until 10 days from symptom onset/test date.
  - If a student left campus prior to the 10 days from symptom onset, their last day of potential contacts would be their last day on campus.
- Roommates should always be considered a close contact if they shared a room with the case during that time period.
- Once your [CDPH Online COVID-19 Case Report Form](#) is received by CDPH, you will receive an email with additional instructions to either submit a list of close contacts or provide details about campus contact tracing efforts.

## Notifications

- Notify the identified close contacts that they were exposed to someone with COVID-19 on campus. It is recommended that you notify exposed staff and students of the exposure via a preferred, successful method of communication on your campus. A sample close contact notification template is included at the end of this document for those you may be unable to reach by other means or if you choose to send a written notification.
  - Instruct them to quarantine for 14 days from the last day of contact with the person who self-reported (do not reveal the identity of the positive case).
  - Close contacts should monitor their symptoms and contact their medical provider if they develop symptoms of COVID-19.
- All IHE staff and students, regardless of whether they are close contacts or not, should be notified of the positive case, while maintaining confidentiality. You may use the general notification letter template at the end of this document as a guide.

## Isolation/Quarantine Recommendations

### For student or staff with a positive test:

- Ensure the positive individual is aware that they should remain isolated on campus (in a location designated by the IHE), or return home and away from others for at least 10 days since their symptoms first appeared (or for asymptomatic individuals, from their test date) and at least 24 hours from last fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer.

### For students or staff with an identified close contact exposure:

- The CDC recommends that any students or staff with close contact to a person suspected of having or diagnosed with COVID-19 be excluded from classes and public settings for **14 days from the last day of exposure to a positive case** and monitored for symptoms. If symptoms develop, they are strongly recommended to be evaluated and tested for COVID-19 and isolated until test results return.
  - Negative testing does not clear a close contact to return to classes/public settings sooner than 14 days from the date of last exposure.
- While universal masking on campus and other precautions are critical to prevent spread of COVID-19 within your institution, out of an abundance of caution, these factors will not change the recommendation for quarantine of close contacts.

## **For student or staff with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, regardless of if they have a known contact:**

- CDPH strongly recommends testing for all staff and students with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
- If a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19, they should be referred to their healthcare provider or student health for testing and isolated while awaiting the test result.
  - Isolation can be lifted with documentation of a negative test for COVID-19.
  - However, if an individual was a close contact of a case, and was in quarantine during that time, they should remain in quarantine for the determined 14 days, even with a negative COVID-19 test result.
- If a student or staff has symptoms, and is not tested for COVID-19, they should remain in isolation for 10 days from symptom onset unless:
  - There is lab confirmed alternative diagnosis AND It has been 24-hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication).

## **Testing Recommendations**

All close contacts (with or without symptoms) should be tested **between days 5 and 9 after exposure to a positive case**. Depending on IHE resources, close contacts of positive cases should be referred to student health or call their healthcare provider to arrange for testing. If other testing options are needed, refer to the [City of Chicago's coronavirus testing website](#).

- A negative result does not rule out developing COVID-19 disease and does not clear a close contact to return to class/public settings sooner than 14 days from the date of last exposure. Quarantine for 14 days is essential to continue to monitor for symptoms.
- A positive result should be reported to the IHE as well as CDPH. If positive, individuals should isolate themselves until:
  - It has been at least 10 days since the onset of the individual's illness or specimen collection date;
  - The individual's symptoms, including cough, have improved; and
  - The individual is free from fever without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

**If symptoms develop** at any time during the 14 days, the individual should be evaluated and tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible.

- A negative result does not rule out developing COVID-19 disease. Quarantine for 14 days is essential to continue to monitor for symptoms. If symptoms worsen, the individual should speak with their healthcare provider to discuss retesting.
- A positive result should be reported to the IHE as well as CDPH. If positive, individuals should isolate themselves until:
  - It has been at least 10 days since the onset of the individual's illness or specimen collection date;
  - The individual's symptoms, including cough, have improved; and
  - The individual is free from fever without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

**Other IHE Testing Considerations:** In some settings, broader testing, beyond close contacts, is recommended as a part of a strategy to control COVID-19 transmission.

- In IHEs, residence halls, laboratory facilities, and lecture rooms may be settings with the potential for rapid and pervasive spread. Expanded testing might include testing of all people who were in proximity of an individual confirmed to have COVID-19 (e.g., those who shared communal spaces or bathrooms), or testing all individuals within a shared setting (e.g., testing all residents on a floor or an entire residence hall).

## Cleaning

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility. Follow [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#). **Unless otherwise recommended by CDPH, automatic facility closure is not required with a single case of COVID-19 as long as close contacts have been notified of quarantine recommendations.**

## Next Steps

1. After receiving a report, CDPH will call the positive staff member or student once the positive lab result is received from a healthcare provider and conduct household and community contact tracing off-campus as needed.
2. You should notify CDPH if additional positive cases are identified on campus by filling out the CDPH COVID-19 confidential [online case report form](#) (select the option Cluster of 2 or more cases OR single case in a congregate setting).
3. Refer to the following resources for further information:
  - a. [www.chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://www.chicago.gov/coronavirus)
  - b. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/ihe-testing.html>
  - c. <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home/reopening-business-portal/business-guidelines.html>
  - d. Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) COVID-19 Guidance: [https://www.ibhe.org/pdf/IBHE\\_Guidance\\_062220.pdf](https://www.ibhe.org/pdf/IBHE_Guidance_062220.pdf)

# Notification Templates

## **CLOSE CONTACT COMMUNICATION**

Subject: Exposure to COVID-19 Case at \_(FACILITY)\_

Dear \_(Individual's Name)\_,

We are writing to update you on a recent development regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). We have learned that a \_(FACILITY)\_ employee/student has been diagnosed with COVID-19. You were identified as a close contact of this individual.

You should monitor your health starting now through \_(DATE of 14 days after last exposure to positive case)\_. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

You should not go to work or school and should avoid public places during this time.

**If you develop [symptoms of COVID-19](#)**, please contact your medical provider to discuss evaluation and testing. Any individuals who are sick with or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and away from others for at least 10 days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 1 day (24 hours) from last fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer. See the Chicago Department of Public Health's [guidance on what to do if you are sick](#). If your symptoms are severe, such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or difficulty waking up, or bluish lips or face, please seek the closest emergency department or call 9-1-1 immediately.

**If you do not have symptoms**, it is recommended to be tested 5 to 9 days after your exposure to a positive case, which was \_DATE\_. Close contacts of positive cases are encouraged to call their healthcare provider to arrange for testing. If other testing options are needed, refer to the [City of Chicago's coronavirus testing website](#). Remember that even if you test negative, you must still complete the full 14-day quarantine. If you test positive, you must stay home for at least 10 days after your test date.

For any additional COVID-19 questions or support, please visit [www.chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://www.chicago.gov/coronavirus) for the most reliable information. If you do not find the information you need on the website, email [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov).

The health and wellness of our staff and students are the highest priority of \_(FACILITY)\_. We continue to follow Chicago Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines as we ensure proper protocols and preventative measures are in place for the health and safety of our staff and patrons. Please contact us at \_(FACILITY CONTACT INFORMATION)\_ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

SIGNATURE

(FACILITY LEADERSHIP NAME)

## **GENERAL COMMUNICATION**

Subject: Confirmed COVID-19 Case at \_(FACILITY)\_

Dear Staff and Families,

We are writing to update you on a recent development regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). We have learned that a \_(FACILITY)\_ employee/student has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

[The employee/student was last at the facility on (DATE) - only to be included if it can be done without obviously identifying the individual. If needed, give a broad date like “the week of \_\_\_\_\_.”] To ensure the health and safety of our families and staff, following CDC guidance, \_(FACILITY)\_ [will ensure/has conducted] a thorough cleaning and disinfection of our facility.

Students and staff who have been identified as having been in prolonged close contact with this individual [will be/have been] notified via a separate communication. As a reminder, prolonged close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for 15 minutes or more. Those who had brief, casual contact with an infected individual are not considered at great risk of transmission and, for most people, the illness is generally mild and can be safely managed at home. As always, everyone should monitor their health and stay at home if they develop symptoms. Anyone who develops severe symptoms should seek medical care immediately.

We continue to follow Chicago Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines as we ensure proper protocols and preventative measures are in place for the health and safety of our staff and patrons.

### **Public Health Guidance**

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If you or your child develop symptoms of COVID-19, please contact your medical provider to discuss whether you need to be evaluated in person or tested.

For severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or difficulty waking up, or bluish lips or face, please seek the closest emergency department or call 9-1-1 immediately.

Any individuals who are sick with or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and away from others for at least 10 days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 1 day (24 hours) from last fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer.

For any additional COVID-19 questions or support, please visit [www.chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://www.chicago.gov/coronavirus) for the most reliable information. If you do not find the information you need on the website, email [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov). The health and wellness of our staff and students are the highest priority of \_(FACILITY)\_. Please contact us at \_(FACILITY CONTACT INFORMATION)\_ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

SIGNATURE  
(FACILITY LEADERSHIP NAME)