Guidance for Mitigating COVID-19 at Higher Education Institutions

5/19/2021

This guidance applies to all higher education institutions—as defined by Executive Order 21-11, as amended by Executive Orders 21-21 and 21-23 (“EO”)—and applies from Friday, May 7, 2021, at 12 p.m. (noon) through May 27, 2021. Higher education institutions must continue to follow all other applicable Stay Safe Industry Guidance (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp). The EO requires all businesses to have and implement a written Higher Education Plan that addresses EO requirements and applicable Stay Safe Industry Guidance. For more information about plan requirements, refer to applicable Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

This guidance has been updated to align with EO 21-11, 21-21, and 21-23, a CDC transmission of COVID-19 update (5/13/2021), and removal of face covering EO requirements (5/14/2021).

In developing this guidance, MDH reviewed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance for Higher Education, the American College Health Association, and recommendations from the MDH Higher Education workgroups, composed of representatives from colleges and universities across Minnesota. Additionally, this guidance was developed taking into account parameters and capacities already set forth in other state guidance documents, including Stay Safe Industry Guidance and MDH’s guidance for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 schools.

For additional guidance related to higher education institutions, refer to Institutes of Higher Education (IHE): COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/ihe.html).

Preventing the spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people; land in their eyes, nose, or mouth; or land on surfaces that people touch. The risk of COVID-19 transmission increases when people gather with other households. Several key strategies can reduce the risk of getting sick or transmitting COVID-19:

Wear a face covering when recommended by MDH or CDC.

- There is no longer a statewide requirement to wear face coverings in most settings. However, other federal, state, and/or local laws may require face coverings in some settings, and businesses may set their own requirements. Additionally, Minnesota’s Safe Learning Plan, along with the existing face covering guidance for schools and child care settings, remains in effect.
- For more information about face covering recommendations, visit Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html).

If you are not vaccinated:
- Keep at least 6 feet of physical distance from other households and follow the face covering recommendations in the above MDH resources.

Vaccinated or not vaccinated, MDH strongly recommends that everyone:
- Wash their hands often.
- Follow guidance on staying home (quarantine) if you were exposed to someone who has COVID-19. People who are fully vaccinated may not need to quarantine in many situations. Visit Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf) for more details.
- Stay home if they are sick. Visit If You Are Sick: COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html).
- Follow testing recommendations for when they travel, have COVID-19 symptoms, or are exposed to COVID-19. Visit COVID-19 Testing (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html) for information about who should get tested and how to get a test.
- Work from home if possible. Employers must provide reasonable accommodations as required under existing federal and state law. Employers are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with one or more members of their household who have underlying medical conditions and who are unable to be vaccinated.

Requirements for higher education

- Follow the requirements in the applicable Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp) and the requirements in this section. The recommendations sections below contain additional information and suggestions for implementing requirements in Higher Education Institutions.
- Develop plans that address returning to campus, social distancing, testing needs, contact tracing, isolation, quarantine, and other applicable requirements or campus needs, as appropriate.
- Plans may also consider additional voluntary mitigation strategies (for example, a policy requiring or recommending face coverings). Please refer to the “Additional recommendations for higher education” section below.
Classroom environments and gatherings

- Indoor classroom occupancy should be limited to no more than 50 students whenever possible. Classes must follow the below requirements, which vary by class size.
- For indoor classes that have fewer than 50 students:
  - The institution must require that students and workers maintain 6 feet of social distance as much as possible.
    - Allowances for shorter distances can be made, such as in classrooms that have fixed seats/tables, or in settings where there needs to be closer collaboration like in labs, and where 6 feet of social distancing can’t be maintained.
      - In these settings use assigned seating/seating charts or assigned partners or groups in order to minimize potential exposure and to expedite follow-up should an exposure occur.
      - Remember: If an individual is diagnosed with COVID-19, all persons who were within 6 feet from the positive case for greater than 15 minutes while the person was infectious, or who had direct physical contact, would be considered exposed and would likely be advised to quarantine.
- For indoor classes that have greater than 50 students:
  - All students and workers must maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet, without exception. Additional monitoring (beyond the instructor) is encouraged to ensure that students follow social distancing measures. Indoor classes may only exceed 250 students if the institution follows the requirements for managing occupancy in the applicable Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp). In the context of classes, the Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues must be used only to calculate allowable occupancy, and the more specific requirements in this guidance (e.g., requirements for social distancing) apply in all other situations.
  - Indoor social gatherings are limited to a maximum of 50 people. Outdoor social gatherings no longer are subject to a gathering size limit. When gathering indoors, students should form household-like pods and keep the pods separated by 6 feet. This guidance also applies to study groups.
  - In all other indoor settings, maintain social distancing as is indicated in this guidance and other setting-specific guidance. This includes interpretive guidance for the learning environments, dining halls, housing, and other settings where students gather.
  - Students returning home over a break are not considered a separate household from their family; however, they should follow recommendations from MDH on Institutes of Higher Education (IHE): COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/ihe.html).
- Household-like pods: For the purpose of residential campuses, household-like pods should be considered as those students living in the same section of housing, such as a floor or independent wing of a dorm or a resident hall. Institutions may also permit pods to be formed based on other criteria, such as a friend group, student group, or an athletic pod that consistently brings the same people together.
Gyms, studios, fitness centers, and field house requirements and guidance

- For recreational uses of indoor spaces in gyms, fitness facilities, studios, weight rooms, and field houses must follow the occupancy limits in the Stay Safe Guidance for Gyms, Studios, and Fitness Centers (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/gyms-studios-fitness-centers.jsp). An occupancy calculator is available at Stay Safe: Calculate the reduced capacity of your facility/venue (staysafe.mn.gov/capacity-calculator/).

- Those people using indoor spaces of a gym for recreational purposes must comply with the following requirements:
  - Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet in all indoor areas of the facility, including where people are exercising or engaging in physical activity.
  - Indoor group fitness classes cannot exceed 50 people. The maximum number of people allowed in a fitness class may be less depending on the size of the class area (refer to the Stay Safe Guidance for Gyms, Studios, and Fitness Centers [staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/gyms-studios-fitness-centers.jsp] for more information about fitness classes).

Campus dining services requirements


Additional recommendations for higher education

The guidance listed below are recommendations from OHE and MDH on how to implement the above requirements as colleges and universities continue the current educational year.

Higher education in Minnesota is diverse, including to the extent there is a residential component. Each institution will have to implement the following guidance in a way that is most applicable and feasible to its unique setting. As such, institutions should think through the following scenarios and guidance as they create their plans. As plans develop, please continue to reach out to OHE and MDH as needed.

This guidance document was developed using the Minnesota Higher Education Workgroup Proposed Strategies, and the following resources:

- Coronavirus Disease 2019 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/)
- Stay Safe Industry Guidance (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp)
Create different scenario plans for COVID-19

Create scenario plans for how your institution will:

- Manage student arrival to campus in a way that minimizes congestion.
- Monitor and screen for illness and overall student, faculty, and staff’s cooperation with prevention measures, such as physical distancing, facial coverings, etc.
  - Adjust communications and messaging as needed to improve cooperation with prevention measures.
- Partner with MDH and contain the spread of illness when it occurs.
- Scale back operations if disease levels indicate a need for changes in operations, including:
  - Reducing the number or canceling events and programs.
  - Shutting down as a result of a significant outbreak on campus or in the surrounding community.

Domains to consider when creating the above plans include: instruction delivery; instruction schedule; classrooms; libraries; study spaces; lab instruction; studio instruction; outreach; housing; housing occupancy; residential dining; retail dining and catering; rec centers; student unions; student life programming; and events.

Strategize for on-campus learning

- Most institutions are well into the 2020-2021 learning year, though some do have rolling or staggered start dates throughout the calendar year. MDH has also advised institutions to consider delayed or staggered starts as a means of minimizing the number of students on campus and opportunities for transmission. For students just beginning on-campus learning:
  - Consider or continue to use a range of start times for returning students back to campus. This can range from on-time, early, or delayed. This includes strategies such as having an earlier or later start date, and/or expanding or removing breaks to mitigate the amount college students are going back and forth between communities.
  - Consider or continue phasing-in of students; some institutions are staggering how they return students to campus, by bringing different classes or different groups first to allow for the reduction of congestion.
  - Make clear that students, faculty, and staff should not return to campus if they are sick; ensure sick and leave policies support a delayed start when necessary.

Planned academic breaks and beginning and end of terms

- Encourage students, staff, and faculty to review MDH and CDC guidance for travel when planning to leave for the year, arrive for summer term, or take academic or personal breaks.
  - Protect Yourself & Others: Traveling (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#travel)
- Phase in campus activities for new student arrivals or those returning from break.
- Continue to support campus activities in a way that reduces transmission potential of COVID-19.
- Minimize large events or activities during the first couple of weeks of bringing students back to campus.
- Promote activities or events that can be held with smaller groups of people.
- Structure events or activities so that attendees are divided into smaller groups.

**Implement measures for preventing COVID-19 transmission**

The following measures contribute to a layered approach in disease mitigation; each layer that can be added provides extra support for preventing transmission. This is important to keep in mind as colleges and universities navigate the uniqueness of their institution.

- Promote COVID-19 vaccine among faculty, staff, and students.
- Ensure students, staff, and vendors adhere to social distancing protocols in this guidance.
- Institute hand hygiene protocols, including “sanitize-in and sanitize-out” protocols for classrooms and other learning settings.
- Develop a protocol to quickly identify sick students, faculty, or staff.
  - Have symptom check signs at key entry points such as when entering a classroom, libraries, or dining halls.
- In general, being outside reduces transmission between people. It is strongly recommended that in settings where individuals, classes, or activities can be held outside, that they do so.
- Consider institution-level requirements or recommendations on face coverings, especially when vaccination rates of the staff and student population are either low or unknown. Institutions might consider:
  - Recommending or requiring face coverings for areas on campus prone to a high density of people and where social distancing of 6 feet or more cannot be maintained. Examples include, but are not limited to, indoor environments such as dorms, or other environments with crowds and congestion.
  - More information about face coverings is available at [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations](www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html).

**Reimagine the learning environment**

- Consider hybrid learning environments that allows in-person and online coursework, activities, and engagement opportunities. This also allows learning flexibility if students or faculty need to continue courses while sick or in quarantine.
- Refer to the classroom total occupancy capacity limitations discussed on page 3 of this document.
- Other ways to support social distancing in indoor classrooms, labs, and other learning settings.
  - Host classes with small enrollment in larger rooms.
GUIDANCE FOR MITIGATING COVID-19 AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- Provide adequate distance between individuals engaged in experiential learning opportunities (e.g., labs, vocational skill building activities).
- Create distance between students in college or university vehicles (e.g., skipping rows).
- Offer distance learning in addition to in-person classes to help reduce the number of in-person attendees.
- Reduce bottlenecks when students come into and leave class. Consider creating one-way guides or directing flow in narrow hallways or in areas where congestion is high.
- Follow Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf). This guidance should be followed for all music-related activities including voice and musical instrument lessons, choir, bands, and orchestra.

Implement housing plans that support reduced risks of transmission

- Consider having enough space for heads to be at least 6 feet apart in shared dorm rooms.
- Consider reducing the number of students per room or per dorm to promote reducing number of close contacts if one person becomes sick.
- Strongly consider not having dorms at full capacity to reduce overall number of students in the building and therefore resulting congestion.
- When feasible, add physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens or shower curtains, between bathroom sinks or other areas that cannot be at least 6 feet apart. If difficult to achieve, place signage to maintain proper physical distancing of 6 feet and limit capacity in the shared bathroom.

Evaluate other indoor settings where students gather on campus

- For indoor common areas: arrange chairs and tables to support at least 6 feet between people as much as possible, and at least 6 feet between common furniture.
  - Space furniture out such that gatherings are contained, that there is adequate space between groups, and that crowding is minimized.
  - Restrict number of people allowed in the common area.
  - Consider temporarily closing off a specific common area if social distancing rules are not being followed.
- Implement ongoing evaluations and monitoring of student and staff behavior and continue to adjust approaches, communication, messaging, or education needs to help continue to guide appropriate behaviors and norms. Behaviors include cooperation with prevention measures such as physical distancing, facial coverings, etc.
- In general, MDH does not recommend complete closure of common areas as students will likely still gather in other areas. These gathering spots may be in smaller rooms or areas that would promote transmission potential.
- If facility showers need to be used, only allow shower and locker room use if there are partitions or else place signage to maintain proper physical distancing of 6 feet.
- Reserve space or create a plan to be able to adequately isolate sick people and quarantine close contacts when planning for on-campus housing.
Create testing plans for suspect COVID-19 cases

Testing access
- Testing access is crucial to preventing COVID-19 transmission in higher education institutions. Without the ability to refer students, faculty, or staff to testing for COVID-19, there may be missed opportunities to quickly identify COVID-19 on your campus.
- Provide resources for testing for people who are symptomatic.
  - Consider promoting link to where people can find COVID-19 testing: Find Testing Locations (mn.gov/covid19/get-tested/testing-locations/index.jsp).
- Institutes of Higher Education should also:
  - Have the capacity to test close contacts per recommendations and guidance by CDC and MDH.
  - Consider strategies for broader testing when bringing students back to campus after breaks, and also consider ongoing surveillance or screening opportunities as testing resources allow.

Testing strategies
- Promote a culture for students, staff, and faculty to seek out testing if symptomatic.
- If a student, faculty, or staff tests positive for COVID-19, the case will be reported to MDH/Local Public Health (LPH) by the testing lab or provider. MDH/LPH will do the case and contact investigation and follow-up with the college or university. Some colleges and universities are doing their own or additional case and contact investigations. Refer to the Case and Contact Tracing Section of this document for more details.
- MDH recommends that close contacts of a case of COVID-19 be tested regardless of whether or not symptoms are present, this testing should be done around 7 days after exposure.
- If a campus sees a cluster of three or more cases in a short time span:
  - MDH or LPH can work with the campus to determine if cases are related.
  - Decisions to do wider testing will be made using the following criteria:
    - Are cases close in time together, or spread out over several weeks?
    - Are new cases traceable to previous cases?
    - Is there other case activity on campus?
    - Are students being forthcoming with close contacts?
  - MDH or LPH may recommend any of the following testing strategies depending on the epidemiology of the cases. These may include testing broadly on:
    - A floor.
    - A residence hall.
    - A team, club, class, or activity.
  - Broader campus or community testing may be warranted if a campus continues to see an increase in cases and other control measures are not preventing further transmission.
Depending on testing availability and community transmission, college campuses can consider any of the following:

- Broad testing of a campus before students leave campus or after students return to the campus.
- Ongoing testing of certain sub-groups, such as:
  - Students who are health care workers.
  - Student-teachers.
  - Athletes.
  - Musicians or vocalists.
  - Other groups where ongoing transmission is seen.
- Ongoing random sampling of the student population, examples include weekly testing of 10-15% of the student population.

**Implement contact tracing processes**

MDH or LPH will support contact tracing and do the majority of the case investigations. In some situations, a third-party case and contact investigator will be used; however, the overall process outlined below will remain the same. Below is an outline of case and contact tracing and the expectations of the institution in partnering with MDH or LPH.

It is important to consider how an institution will maintain privacy of student, faculty, and staff as much as possible. Colleges/universities should consult with their lawyer regarding the sharing of private health information. It is important that institutions and people who work there only share protected health information with those they are legally able to share it with. Higher education should take this into consideration as they develop their notification plans. In general, colleges/universities may want to consider having a point person/point phone number that students, faculty, and staff use first when identifying themselves as a case. This will also help prevent accidental notification of classes or campus prior to an investigation.

For more information, visit [Guidance for COVID-19 Cases and Outbreaks in Higher Education](www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/ihecases.pdf).

**Case and contact investigation flow**

- Once a person tests positive for COVID-19:
  - The case (the person who tested positive) is notified by their testing facility.
  - The testing facility and/or the lab also reports to MDH.
    - Occasionally the testing facility will report to the case before the lab report reaches MDH. This is most likely to occur if the testing facility performs the test in its own facility.
  - The case is usually reported to MDH through electronic lab reporting, occasionally it is first reported by the health care provider.
  - Schools are able and encouraged to submit cases to MDH via REDCap or via email, especially if the case and/or the school has not been contacted by MDH.
- REDCap survey to submit cases: COVID-19 College and University Case Reporting (https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=KWF3TMAX7E).

- Once the lab report is received, MDH/LPH interviews the case by phone. During the interview MDH/LPH:
  - Determines individual contacts.
  - Determines other settings of potential contacts (classroom, bar, gym, etc.).
  - Close contacts are individuals who were closer than 6 feet to the case for 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. If individuals are identified as being close contacts, there are two ways those contacts can be notified.
    - The case chooses to have MDH/LPH give them information to share with their contacts (so MDH/LPH doesn’t call the contact directly).
    - The case shares the contact’s information and MDH/LPH follow-up with those contacts.

- MDH/LPH reaches out to colleges/universities to notify them of the case and any contacts associated with the college/university.
  - MDH/LPH will work with the college/university to recommend what notification would be warranted. This could include a general campus message, messaging specific to a certain classroom or area on campus in which exposure may have occurred, or messaging specific to people who may have been exposed. Messaging may also include information on the level of risk.
  - Often colleges/universities will have more information on students, and in some situations may end up helping MDH/LPH further determine contacts in various settings.

- MDH/LPH also notifies other settings outside the college/university as appropriate.

- Colleges/universities will work with LPH/MDH to:
  - Provide and/or recommend isolation and quarantine as needed and appropriate.
    - Strategies may be different for residential and non-residential institutions.
  - Work with MDH/LPH to reach any cases or their contacts that MDH/LPH has not been able to reach.

- Each institution should have at least one person that can be a COVID-19 point person who can assist with the above tasks. This person should be readily available during the day, including weekends. MDH/LPH recognizes that some institutions may choose different COVID-19 liaisons for students and/or faculty and staff.

**Create isolation and quarantine plans**

- A close contact of a person with COVID-19 should stay at home for 14 days from the last time they had close contact. In some situations, there are options to shorten the quarantine period, refer to below.
- Quarantining is not needed for a close contact who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days and has already recovered.
- **If someone has completed COVID-19 vaccination** (two doses in a two-dose series or one dose in a one-dose series) and is exposed, **they do not need to quarantine if ALL of the following are true:**
  - The COVID-19 exposure was at least 14 days after their vaccination series was fully completed.
  - They do not currently have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Colleges or universities may allow for individuals who have been exposed to quarantine for shorter amounts of time:
  - Campuses can consider a 10-day quarantine period, even among roommates as long as separate isolation and quarantine spaces can be maintained for those roommates. MDH also continues to recommend to test all close contacts of a case around day 7.
  - For students who are in on-campus congregate residences, it is not recommended to use the seven-day quarantine period due to the risk of transmission in congregate living settings. Other settings can consider a seven-day quarantine, which requires a PCR-negative test (not an antigen test or antibody/blood test) with the sample collected on day five after exposure or later.
  - **Please note:** People who follow shortened quarantine options should still monitor symptoms out to day 14, wear face coverings, maintain at least 6 feet of social distancing from others, and get tested right away if symptoms develop.
- Further guidelines for length of quarantine can be found at [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19](www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).
- **Have spaces set aside for sick and/or quarantined students. Examples include:**
  - Dedicated floors or residence halls.
  - Reach out to area hotels in advance to discuss options for possible short notice to house students.
- **Consider having in reserve isolation and/or quarantine accommodations for between 2.5% and 5% of the population who lives on campus.**
- **Provide guidance for isolation (students who have been diagnosed with COVID-19).**
  - Isolation rooms should be physically separated from other residential student rooms.
  - Ideally a person in isolation will have their own bedroom and bathroom.
    - If a shared bathroom or bedroom needs to occur, ensure that students sharing a space have been tested for COVID-19 and are both positive for COVID-19.
  - Students in isolation must have access to alternative modes of course instruction
  - Isolated students should have access to supplies such as a thermometer, face coverings, sanitizing wipes, tissues, soap, hand sanitizer, and toiletries.
  - Students in isolation should have their food delivered, and access to laundry services; health checks should be virtual when possible.
  - Staff who need to interact with students should have appropriate personal protective equipment.
  - Students in isolation should not have any visitors.
Requirements for quarantine (students who have been exposed but don’t yet have symptoms).

- Students, faculty, and staff who are still within 90 days of having tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to quarantine if they are exposed to a person infectious with COVID-19.

Additional recommendations for quarantine:

- Ideally an individual in quarantine should have their own bedroom and bathroom.
  - If people who are in quarantine need to share a bathroom, consider the following strategies:
    - For a single bathroom – have the student clean and disinfect after using.
    - For a common bathroom – have a designated stall and sink for the student and have them wear face coverings whenever leaving their room to use the bathroom facilities.

- Students in quarantine should have their food delivered, have access to laundry services, and health checks should be virtual.

- Students in quarantine must have access to alternative modes of course instruction.

- Students in quarantine should have access to supplies such as a thermometer, face coverings, sanitizing wipes, tissues, soap, hand sanitizer, and toiletries.

- Staff who need to interact with students should have appropriate personal protective equipment.

- Students in quarantine should not have any visitors.

Set expectations for parents that an option may be for their student (or child) to move home for the duration of isolation or quarantine.

- CDC has guidance on how to safely care for a person who is sick. Visit If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html).

In situations where there are multiple cases on a floor in a dorm, MDH may recommend a broader testing strategy. We may even recommend that the floor quarantine together with repeated testing on day 7 and 14. People who test positive would be recommended to move to another location.


**Develop policies that promote the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19**

- Develop a task force to address the needs of high-risk students, staff, and faculty and ensure that those who are high risk are included in surge capacity planning.

- Offer options for faculty and staff at higher risk for severe illness (including older adults and people of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions) that limit their exposure risk (e.g., telework and modified job responsibilities).

- Offer options for students at higher risk for severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g. virtual learning opportunities).
- Put in place policies to protect the privacy of people at higher risk for severe illness regarding underlying medical conditions in compliance with applicable federal and state privacy and confidentiality laws.

- Review applicable CDC guidance:

**Response and surge capacity considerations**

- For metrics for when to implement new mitigation measures, refer to Recommendations for Different Levels of COVID-19 Transmission Among Higher Education Institutions (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/iherecs.pdf).

- When planning for surge scenarios, consider the following:
  - The response and surge capacity needed for different levels of cases (for example: plans for one case in one week, 10 cases in one week, 100 cases in a month).
  - Needed changes to isolation and quarantine strategies.
    - Will you have to have individuals isolating together?
    - Will you have to have more people quarantining in the dorms?
    - Will you need to increase messaging to parents to consider helping with isolation and quarantine?
  - Changes to testing needs.
    - Will you need to ask for state assistance?
    - At what point would your ability to test students through your normal routes be exceeded (10 symptomatic in a week, 20 symptomatic in a week, etc.)?
  - Needed changes to routine operations and a phased plan on responding to an increase in cases.
    - Work with MDH or LPH to understand where clusters are occurring.
    - In consultation with MDH or LPH, implement targeted strategies to address clusters.
    - If cases continue to grow, consider canceling or reducing number of gatherings or events on campus before changing class structures.
      - Class structures are controlled environments and may provide a buffer to students congregating elsewhere.
  - If off campus venue is source of cluster, MDH and LPH will work with source of outbreak to implement interventions.

**Monitor disease trends and activity in your area**

Have expectations for students depending on the level of activity on your campus, and in some cases in your surrounding community. Examples may include:

- Ask students to not frequent bars or other settings known to have high transmission potential.
- Cancel or limit events on campus that would facilitate large groups of individuals coming together.
- Promote COVID-19 vaccine.
- Promote face covering recommendations or requirements in your institutions’ policies.

**Ventilation on campus**

Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to students, faculty, or staff using the facility. Visit [CDC: Considerations for Institutes of Higher Education](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/considerations.html).

Work with your facility’s engineers to consider the following recommendations:

- [Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Resources from ASHRAE and Others](https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources).

**Cleaning and disinfecting**

Follow MDH-specific guidance for Institutes of Higher Education:

- [COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Institutes of Higher Education](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanihe.html)
- [Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 for Facilities Service and Cleaning Staff](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanfaq.html)

As long as routine cleaning and disinfecting have taken place regularly, additional cleaning and disinfecting is likely not necessary; nor in most situations is it necessary to close down a room or area for 24 hours.

**Future guidance**

This document offers broad scope guidance. MDH will update strategies and guidance as more is learned from experiences in Minnesota and as recommended by the CDC.
Higher education resources


Other resources

- MDH Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/)
- For events or meetings that the university may host, refer to Stay Safe Industry Guidance (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp)
- MDH Guidance Library (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidance.html)
- COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Requirements for Restaurants and Bars on Stay Safe Guidance for Restaurants and Bars (staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/restaurants-bars.jsp)
- Recommendations for Different Levels of COVID-19 Transmission Among Higher Education Institutions (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/iherecs.pdf)
- Guidance for COVID-19 Cases and Outbreaks in Higher Education (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/ihecases.pdf)
- COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Institutes of Higher Education (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanihe.html)