Guidance for COVID-19 Exposure Management in Institutes of Higher Education

Recent Updates: (Changes highlighted in yellow)
8/24/2021: Added a quarantine exemption for asymptomatic students who are fully vaccinated AND have an exposure to a person with confirmed COVID-19 AND test negative for COVID-19 for 5 consecutive days after last date of exposure.

A targeted public health response to contain COVID-19 exposures at a community-level can help maximize the impact of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) COVID-19 response.

IHE are trusted community partners that can help DPH improve the timeliness and impact of the Public Health response through rapid initiation of an IHE COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan (EMP) when notified of COVID-19 cases and clusters on campus. Immediate implementation of an EMP when a single case of COVID-19 is identified at an IHE can accelerate the ability to contain the spread of infection and prevent outbreaks from occurring on campus.

The steps for managing exposures to 1, 2, and 3 or more COVID-19 cases on campus are described below and summarized in Appendix A. Because IHE will vary in the level of resources available for COVID-19 exposure management, required steps are the minimum elements that must be included in the EMP. Recommended steps include optional elements for exposure management where IHE resources are sufficient.

The term “campus” in this document refers to non-residential settings on the IHE property and residential congregate settings that house or employ large groups of IHE students and employees, both on- and off-campus.

**Exposure Management Planning Prior to Identifying 1 COVID-19 Case at IHE Setting**

- **Required:** A designated IHE COVID-19 Compliance Task Force that is responsible for establishing and enforcing all COVID-19 safety protocols and ensuring that staff and students receive education about COVID-19. A designated COVID-19 Compliance Officer who serves as a liaison to DPH in the event of a COVID-19 cluster or outbreak at an IHE setting.

- **Required:** A plan for establishing spaces and housing for students to safely isolate and quarantine when needed. Guidance on isolation and quarantine plans for students is provided in Appendix B.

- **Required:** A plan for all students and employees who have (1) symptoms consistent with COVID-19, (2) are quarantined because of exposure to case(s) on campus, or (3) are at an IHE with an active public health investigation to have access to diagnostic testing or be tested for COVID-19. Note: Testing is not required for individuals who have recovered from laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days unless Public Health deems it necessary as part of an active investigation.

- **Recommended:** During periods of increased community transmission, it is recommended that an IHE implement an asymptomatic screening testing program. These programs should prioritize employees and students that are not fully vaccinated for regular testing. If there is sufficient testing capacity, IHEs may consider including fully vaccinated individuals in asymptomatic screening testing programs. **Recommended:** Students and staff are encouraged to perform daily health screenings for infectious diseases, including COVID-19, and to stay home or seek medical care for any symptoms identified.
Exposure Management for 1 COVID-19 Case at IHE Setting

- **Required:** After identifying 1 confirmed COVID-19 case (student or employee), IHE Compliance Task Force instructs the case to follow Home Isolation Instructions for COVID-19 ([ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation](http://ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation)).
  
  **NOTE:** a confirmed COVID-19 case is an individual who has a positive COVID-19 test.

- **Required:** IHE Compliance Task Force informs the case that DPH will contact the case directly through the DPH Case and Contact Investigation Program to collect additional information and issue the Health Officer Order for Case Isolation.

- **Required:** IHE Compliance Task Force must notify DPH of (1) students and staff with confirmed COVID-19 who were on campus at any point within the 14 days prior to the illness onset date and (2) persons at the IHE who were exposed to the infected person during the infectious period. The illness onset date is the first date of COVID-19 symptoms or the COVID-19 test date, whichever is earlier. If the IHE is reporting cases among students or staff who were not on campus but live nearby in off-campus residences, reporting should be limited to students or staff who had interacted with other students or staff from the IHE within the 14 days prior to the illness onset date.
  
  - A case is considered to be infectious from 2 days before their symptoms first appeared until they are no longer required to be isolated (i.e., no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine that reduces fever AND other symptoms have improved AND at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared). A person with a positive COVID-19 test but no symptoms is considered infectious from 2 days before their test was taken until 10 days after their test.

  - A person is considered to have been exposed to a case during the infectious period if at least one of the following criteria are met:
    
    - Being within 6 feet of the infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
    - Having had unprotected contact with the infected person’s body fluids and/or secretions of a person with confirmed COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed or sneezed on, sharing utensils or saliva, or providing care without using appropriate protective equipment).
    - **NOTE:** Exposures will be reviewed by Public Health to assess which persons need to quarantine including the possibility of quarantining people beyond named close contacts if exposures cannot be ruled out.

  - Secure online reporting is the preferred method for notifying DPH of COVID-19 exposures and can be done on a computer or mobile device with access to the secure web application: [http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport](http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport). If online reporting is not possible, reporting can be done manually by downloading and completing the [COVID-19 Case and Contact Line List for the Education Sector](http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport) and sending it to ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov. All case notifications should be submitted within 1 business day of being notified of the case.

- **Required:** Students and employees that are identified to have had an exposure to the case on campus are notified by the IHE Compliance Task Force through a letter or other communication strategies. A Campus Exposure Notification letter template is available at: [COVID-19 Template Notification Letters for Education Settings](http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport). The notification of exposure should include the following messages:

  - Employees with a worksite exposure are required to follow guidance outlined in Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention [Emergency Temporary Standards](http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport) (ETS). A summary of requirements is provided in the Public Health guidance document on [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport).

  - Exposed students and employees should test for COVID-19, regardless of symptoms or vaccination status, and inform IHE of test results. This will determine the extent of disease spread on campus and serve as a basis for further control measures. Testing resources include: Employee Health Services or Occupational Health Services, Student Health Center, Personal Healthcare Providers, Community Testing Sites: [covid19.lacounty.gov/testing](http://covid19.lacounty.gov/testing). Individuals who need assistance finding a medical provider can call the LA County Information line 2-1-1, which is available 24/7.
• Exposed students and employees, who are not fully vaccinated, must self-quarantine (stay in their home or another residence, separate from others) and monitor for symptoms for 10 days from their last contact with the case while infectious (as defined above). If they remain asymptomatic, they are released from quarantine after Day 10 but must continue to monitor their health and adhere to COVID-19 prevention precautions through Day 14.

• Asymptomatic students who are fully vaccinated AND who are a close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 case are subject to a modified quarantine as described below. **This section applies only to students and does not apply to staff.**
  
  o They should test 3 to 5 days following the date of last exposure. Until the student receives a negative test result, they must adhere to modified quarantine for the full 10 days outlined below.
    
    ▪ If they live on campus, they should remain on campus in their residence, except for continuing to attend on-campus classes and academic activities if they are consistently and correctly masked and remain asymptomatic. They are not allowed to participate in on- or off-campus social activities until they receive a negative test result or have completed modified quarantine for the full 10 days. This includes attending or playing in sporting events, team practices and training, or competitions.
    
    ▪ If they live off campus, they should remain in their residence and may leave their residence only to go to and from their classes and other on-campus academic activities if they are consistently and correctly masked and remain asymptomatic. They are not allowed to participate in on- or off-campus social activities until they receive a negative test result or have completed modified quarantine for the full 10 days. This includes attending or playing in sporting events, team practices and training, or competitions.
    
    ▪ While on modified quarantine, the student should not go to any indoor public- or community-setting that is off-campus, such as restaurants, bars, markets, and offices among others, nor attend any outdoor gathering off-campus.
      
      o If the student declines to test, they must follow this modified quarantine for 10 days after their date of exposure and continue to monitor their symptoms.
      
      o If the student receives a negative test result from a specimen collected 3 to 5 days after their exposure, they are released from the modified quarantine at that time.
      
      o If the student receives a positive COVID-19 test result OR develops symptoms at any point within 14 days of their last exposure, they must immediately isolate and follow Public Health’s [Home Isolation Guidance](#).

• Asymptomatic students who are fully vaccinated AND who are a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case are exempt from modified quarantine if they test negative for COVID-19 for 5 consecutive days after the date of last exposure.

• NOTE: Asymptomatic students and employees who have recovered from laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days AND who are a close contact to a confirmed case are not required to quarantine or test for COVID-19. However, they should monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following an exposure.

• IHE will assist with identifying housing for students and faculty to safely isolate or quarantine when needed.

• DPH will contact exposed students and employees who meet the quarantine requirement though the Case and Contact Investigation Program to collect additional information and issue the Health Officer Order for Quarantine.

• **Recommended:** IHE Compliance Task Force will determine whether additional notification is needed to inform the wider campus community about the exposure and precautions being taken to prevent

### Exposure Management for 2 COVID-19 Cases within a 14-day Period at IHE Setting

- **Required:** After identifying 2 confirmed cases (students and/or employees) within a 14-day period, IHE follows required steps for 1 confirmed case.

- **Recommended:** IHE Compliance Task Force assesses whether the 2 cases are epidemiologically linked, meaning that the two affected individuals were both present at some point in the same setting and same time while either or both were infectious.*

  *A case is considered to be infectious from 2 days before symptoms first appeared until they are no longer required to be isolated (i.e., no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine that reduces fever AND other symptoms have improved AND at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared). A person with a positive COVID-19 test but no symptoms is considered infectious from 2 days before their test was taken until 10 days after their test."

- Determination of epidemiological links between cases may require further investigation to understand exposure history and identify all possible locations and persons that may have been exposed to the case while infectious at the site. NOTE: Epidemiologically linked cases include persons with identifiable connections to each other such as sharing a physical space (e.g., in a classroom, office, or gathering), indicating a higher likelihood of linked spread of disease in that setting rather than sporadic transmission from the broader community.

- If epidemiological links do not exist, IHE continues with routine exposure management.

- If epidemiological links exist, IHE reinforces messages to students and employees on precautions to take to prevent spread on campuses, including implementation of site-specific interventions.

### Exposure Management for ≥ 3 COVID-19 Cases within a 14-day Period at IHE Setting

- **Required:** If IHE identifies a cluster of 3 or more confirmed cases (students and/or employees) within a 14-day period, IHE should proceed with the following steps:

  - Report the cluster immediately to DPH. Secure online reporting is the preferred method for notifying DPH and can be done on a computer or mobile device with access to the secure web application: [http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport](http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport). If online reporting is not possible, reporting can be done manually by downloading and completing the COVID-19 Case and Contact Line List for the Education Sector and sending it to ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov.

  - DPH will review the submitted information to determine whether the outbreak criteria have been met and will contact the IHE within 1 business day to advise on next steps.

  - **Outbreak Criteria:**

    - **IHE Non-residential Setting:** At least 3 confirmed cases with symptomatic or asymptomatic COVID-19 within a 14-day period in a group* with members who are epidemiologically linked, do not share a household, and are not a close contact of each other outside of the campus.

      *IHE groups include persons that share a common membership (e.g., Greek or other social organization, athletic teams, sports and recreation clubs, academic cohort, workplace on campus).

    - **IHE Residential Setting***: At least 3 laboratory-confirmed cases with symptomatic or asymptomatic COVID-19 within a 14-day period within the same or multiple dwellings that share a common area. *IHE Residential Settings include on- and off-campus residential housing facilities where groups of IHE students and/or employees congregate and/or reside (e.g., on-campus residences, on- or off-campus Greek housing).
Appendix A: Steps for managing exposures to 1, 2, and ≥ 3 confirmed COVID-19 cases in non-residential or residential congregate settings associated with IHE

| 1 Case | 1) **Required:** IHE instructs the case to follow Home Isolation Instructions.  
2) **Required:** IHE informs case that DPH will contact the case directly to collect additional information and issue Health Officer Order for Isolation.  
3) **Required:** IHE works with the case to identify IHE contacts with exposure.  
4) **Required:** IHE notifies* identified contacts of exposure and instructs them to quarantine and test for COVID-19. NOTE: Asymptomatic students who are fully vaccinated AND have an exposure may undergo a modified quarantine. Asymptomatic persons who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 90 days AND have an exposure are not required to quarantine or test for COVID-19 unless Public Health deems it necessary as part of an active investigation.  
5) **Required:** IHE informs contacts that DPH will contact them directly to collect additional information and issue Health Officer Order for Quarantine.
6) **Required:** IHE submits a report to DPH within 1 business day with information on the confirmed case and persons who were exposed to the case at the IHE within 1 business day.  
7) **Recommended:** IHE sends general notification* to inform the relevant campus community of the exposure and precautions being taken to prevent spread.

*Templates for exposure notification and general notification are available at: COVID-19 Template Notification Letters for Education Settings.

| 2 Cases | 1) **Required:** Follow steps for 1 confirmed case.  
2) **Recommended:** If the 2 cases occurred within 14 days of each other, IHE works with DPH to determine whether the cases have epidemiological (epi) links. If Epi links exist: IHE implements additional infection control measures.

| 3+ Cases | 1) **Required:** If a cluster of 3 or more cases occurred within 14 days of each other, IHE report this immediately to DPH.
2) **Required:** DPH determines if outbreak criteria have been met. If outbreak criteria are met, a DPH outbreak investigation is activated, and a public health investigator will contact the IHE to coordinate the outbreak investigation.
Appendix B: COVID-19 Guidance for Isolation and Quarantine Plans for Students At Institutes of Higher Education

Guidance for isolation plans for students with COVID-19:

- If student is from local community: IHE should determine if the student is able to isolate in their family homes in accordance with Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance.

- If student lives off-campus: IHE should determine if the living conditions are adequate to support isolation without putting other students at risk in accordance with Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance.

- If student lives on campus in a single room: IHE should determine if the living conditions are adequate to support isolation without putting other students at risk in accordance with Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance.

  - Students in isolation should be restricted to their room in the isolation area. These students cannot attend class, visit other areas of the campus (e.g., fitness center, cafeteria, library, or laundry room), go to the grocery store or pharmacy, or attend any other events or gatherings.

  - Students should not share bathrooms or common spaces with students not in isolation.

- If the off- or on-campus living quarters are not appropriate for isolation: IHE should consider developing a dedicated isolation area, such as dedicating floors, halls, or other separate living spaces for the isolation of students infected with COVID-19 in accordance with Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance.

  - Students in isolation should be housed separately from other students, preferably with their own dedicated points of entry/exit, physical barriers, and visible signage to separate those in isolation from students who do not have COVID-19.

  - Students in isolation should be restricted to their room in the isolation area if there are students in the same area who are not in isolation.

  - Students in isolation may be housed together and may share bathrooms and common spaces. These students cannot attend class, visit other areas of the campus (e.g., fitness center, cafeteria, library, or laundry room), go to the grocery store or pharmacy, or attend any other events or gatherings.

  - If adequate space cannot be dedicated on campus, local hotels and motels may be able to provide sufficient short-term housing. The same isolation scheme would apply for a student in a single room on a floor with other students not on isolation.

- Efforts should be made to ensure compliance with COVID-19 isolation as per Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance, either with direct monitoring or indirect monitoring (i.e. ID card monitoring, contact tracing apps on phones, etc.).

- Outside visitation is not permitted to students in isolation. If the student in isolation requires essential services, staff must wear personal protective equipment, limit their exposure to students, wash hands upon leaving the area, and monitor for signs and symptoms of illness.

- Students in isolation should be provided with any necessary supplies and services (e.g., food, cleaning supplies, laundry, thermometer, medications, information on who to contact if they become ill).

- If the student in isolation requires medical care, the healthcare provider, emergency medical services, and anyone else assisting with the transportation of student should be notified of the student's COVID-19 infection so they can take proper precautions.

- If the student in isolation must leave the living quarters, they should wear a surgical mask or respirator, physically distance themselves from others, and go directly to/from their destination.

- Students in isolation should be given online educational access to missed classes when possible.

- Routine health checks for students in isolation should be done virtually when possible.
Guidance for quarantine plans for exposed students who are asymptomatic and not fully vaccinated

Note: This guidance does not apply to exposed students who are fully vaccinated and asymptomatic. Exposed students who are fully vaccinated and asymptomatic may follow the modified quarantine procedures outlined on page 3 of this document.

- If student is from local community: IHE should determine if the student is able to quarantine in their family homes in accordance with Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance.

- If student lives off-campus: IHE should determine if the living conditions are adequate to support quarantine without putting other students or household members at risk in accordance with Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance.

- If a student lives on campus in a single room: IHE should determine if the living conditions are adequate to support quarantine without putting other students at risk in accordance with Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance.
  - Students in quarantine should be restricted to their room in the quarantine area. These students cannot attend class, visit other areas of the campus (e.g., fitness center, cafeteria, library, or laundry room), go to the grocery store or pharmacy, or attend any other events or gatherings.
  - Students in quarantine should be kept away from other persons in quarantine (i.e., they should not share a room nor be in common rooms together). Ideally, they should use a separate bathroom. If this is not possible, they should wear a surgical mask or respirator when in the common bathroom, avoid being in the bathroom at the same time as others if possible, and should disinfect the bathroom themselves after each use.

- If the off- or on-campus living quarters are not appropriate for quarantine: IHE should consider developing a dedicated quarantine area. All quarantined students should follow Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance.
  - Students in quarantine should be housed separately from other students preferably with their own dedicated points of entry/exit, physical barriers, and visible signage to separate quarantined students from others in the living quarters.
  - Students in quarantine should be restricted to their room in the quarantine area. These students cannot attend class, visit other areas of the campus (e.g., fitness center, cafeteria, library, or laundry room), go to the grocery store or pharmacy, or attend any other events or gatherings.
  - Students in quarantine should be kept away from other persons in quarantine (i.e., they should not share a room nor be in common rooms together). Ideally, they should use a separate bathroom. If this is not possible, they should wear a surgical mask or respirator when leaving their room and when in the shared bathroom. They should avoid being in the shared bathroom at the same time as others if possible and should disinfect the bathroom themselves after each use.
  - If adequate space cannot be dedicated on campus, local hotels and motels may be able to provide sufficient short-term housing. The same quarantine scheme would apply for a student in a single room on a floor with other students not in quarantine.

- Efforts should be made to ensure compliance with COVID-19 quarantine as per Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance, either with direct monitoring or indirect monitoring (i.e. ID card monitoring, contact tracing apps on phones, etc.).

- Outside visitation is not permitted to students in quarantine. If the student in quarantine requires essential services, staff must wear personal protective equipment, limit their exposure to students, wash hands upon leaving the area and monitor for signs and symptoms of illness.

- Students in quarantine should be provided with any necessary supplies and services (e.g., food, cleaning supplies, laundry, thermometer, medications, information on who to contact if they become ill).

- If the student in quarantine requires medical care, the healthcare provider, emergency medical services, and anyone else assisting with the transportation of student should be notified of the student’s exposure so they
can take proper precautions.

- If the student in quarantine must leave the living quarters, they should wear a surgical mask or respirator, physically distance themselves from others, and go directly to/from their destination.
- Students in quarantine should be given online educational access to missed classes when possible.
- Routine health checks for individuals in quarantine should be done virtually when possible.
- If a student in quarantine develops symptoms at any point within 14 days of their last exposure, they must isolate from others immediately and follow instructions in Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance.