

Safe Reopening for Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The following mitigation measures are no longer in place:

- Social distancing requirements
- COVID based capacity limits
- Except for some special settings listed below, the city no longer has a general masking order, and the state's order must be followed.
 - Healthcare institutions including temporary community healthcare events such as vaccine clinics and blood drives.
 - Congregate facilities such as prisons and shelters.
 - Public transportation including planes, trains, buses, taxis, and ride share vehicles.
 - Indoor schools, camps and early childhood education.

The following public health response activities will continue:

- Isolation of cases
- Quarantine of close contacts
- Contact tracing
- Reporting

Institutions may be more restrictive than the city and may choose to continue mitigation measures on campus, even if they are not required by the city.

Helpful links:

[CDC Guidance](#)

[ACHA Guidance](#)

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Identifying Cases and Testing

1. [Citywide Testing Map](#)

2. **Q: Where can we obtain tests? What are the available resources for providing COVID testing access to students - particularly for those who may not have insurance?**

A: The PDPH website provides a list of approximately 65 different locations that offer testing (<https://www.phila.gov/covid-testing-sites/#/>). IHEs should create their own mechanisms for testing. Student Health centers should be able to attain test kits from laboratories. If possible, IHEs should have their own testing center that can work with insurance companies for students and staff on reimbursement. However, if there is an urgent need for test kits, IHEs can reach out to the health department by e-mailing covidtesting@phila.gov.

3. **Q: Is the recommendation for testing close contacts five to seven days after exposure flexible? Will the viral load be high enough to detect the infection if testing is done 10 days or more after exposure?**

A: The PDPH recommends that unvaccinated persons and vaccinated persons living in dorms or other congregate settings who have had a known exposure to COVID-19 be tested. Vaccinated individuals not living in dorms should be tested after an exposure only if they develop symptoms. Persons should wait 5-7 days after the exposure to ensure test accuracy. Waiting a shorter or longer amount of time could impact the accuracy of the results.

In any case, persons with a known exposure to COVID-19 should quarantine according to CDC guidance. If no test is done, they must quarantine at least 10 days. Quarantine can be shortened to 7 days if the person gets a negative test no more than 48 hours before the planned end of quarantine. If the test is positive, the individual should follow recommendations for release from isolation within the PDPH's IHE reopening guidance. If an exposed individual becomes symptomatic, they can get tested immediately. They do not have to wait 5-7 days after exposure.

4. **Q: If the PDPH learns about a positive case within our campus community (student, faculty, staff), will you be notifying the university to ensure we are aware?**

A: The PDPH will notify the IHE's liaison to the PDPH regarding infected and exposed students to assure that individuals can be isolated and quarantined. The PDPH will conduct contact tracing but may need the assistance of the IHE to notify students that have been exposed. The PDPH will not be sharing the identity of infected persons with the entire university.

5. Q: Are there any specific guidelines for who can perform COVID testing? Can athletic trainers support COVID testing?

A: CDC recommends collection of COVID testing by health care providers or supervised self-collection (by a healthcare provider) using appropriate PPE. Home tests that are self-administered are now available as well. Additional guidance can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>.

6. Q: Do you recommend mass screening or surveillance testing?

A: PDPH does not have guidance on surveillance testing at IHEs. The CDC guidance can be found here: [Interim Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education Administrators for SARS-CoV-2 Testing](#)

Additional guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health on this topic can be found here:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance/PSAdultEdGuidance/COVID19TestingGuidelines/Pages/default.aspx>

7. Q: Do you recommend that we ask students/faculty/staff to provide a negative COVID test prior to arriving on campus?

A: The PDPH does not require that students/faculty/staff provide a negative COVID test prior to arriving on campus. If a student, faculty member, or staff member has had a known exposure, they should follow quarantine procedures prior to arriving on campus. Please see recommendations regarding routine screening above (response 6). All state guidelines regarding testing and quarantine should be noted.

8. Q: Do colleges and universities need to report COVID test results?

A: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act mandates reporting of all COVID test results to a public health agency. It is important that PDPH receive all results of POC tests on individuals residing in Philadelphia, including students, to effectively monitor the COVID-19 epidemic. To report COVID-19 testing results to PDPH, use the form at this link: <https://redcap.phila.gov/surveys/?s=HXCWJHRJC3>. As a reminder, it is mandatory to report all positive AND negative results to PDPH.

9. Q: When should we consider using rapid COVID testing?

A: Testing options to diagnose SARS-CoV-2 infection continue to expand as new platforms receive FDA emergency use authorizations. Rapid point-of-care (POC) tests can limit spread of COVID-19 by reducing the time between sample collection and result notification enabling rapid clinical and public health responses. It can be challenging for healthcare providers to determine when to use rapid POC molecular

and antigen tests. For more information please see the Health Advisory on this topic [here](#).

10. Q: Is reporting any student in Philly that contracts COVID-19 a HIPAA violation?

A: HIPAA recognizes the legitimate need for disease reporting for public health purposes. As a result, the rule allows release of information for public health purposes without the consent of the individual. You can find more information regarding HIPAA and public health [here](#).

Isolation and Quarantine

1. Q: Current recommendations for quarantine for exposed faculty, staff and students. Vaccinated persons are not required to quarantine after exposure.

A: CDC continues to endorse quarantine for 14 days and recognizes that any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced burden against a small possibility of ongoing transmission. The PDPH has endorsed the new CDC guidelines for options to reduce quarantine. These guidelines are:

- Persons who have been exposed to COVID-19 can end quarantine after day 10 if they continue to be asymptomatic (Date of last exposure = Day 0); or,
- Quarantine can end after day 7 if they continue to be asymptomatic and receive a negative COVID-19 test 48 hours before they plan to end quarantine

Persons can discontinue quarantine at these time points only if the following criteria are also met:

- No clinical evidence of COVID-19 has been elicited by daily symptom monitoring during the entirety of quarantine up to the time at which quarantine is discontinued; and,
- Daily symptom monitoring continues through quarantine Day 14; and,
- Persons are counseled regarding the need to adhere strictly through Day 14 after exposure to all recommended control efforts (e.g., masking, physical distancing).
- If any symptoms develop, they should immediately self-isolate and get tested for COVID-19 if they can do so without coming into close contact with others.

Additional information can be found at [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

2. Q: If a student becomes sick, should we send them home to isolate?

A: Students living on-campus with confirmed or suspect COVID-19 should be promptly referred to an isolation facility on-campus. Students may travel to a family member's home for isolation and / or quarantine if:

- a. They can travel in a private car

- b. Social distancing and infection prevention recommendations can be maintained in the home (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>)
 - c. No persons with high risk conditions reside at the home

PDPH recommends that IHEs reach out directly to family members to assess whether their home is suitable for isolation and quarantine before allowing a student to return home.

3. Q: Can you provide guidance on how many isolation or quarantine rooms should a college have based on the number of residential students?

A: We currently do not have a requirement for a number of rooms that must be reserved for the fall. However, we do require schools to have a plan to isolate and quarantine students who are unable to isolate in their current residence and whose families do not live locally. The plan can include reserved space in a dorm, or a contract with a nearby hotel.

4. Q: The Q/I recommendation is for single rooms, but your general guidelines are also for single occupancy. Would you please clarify and/or elaborate? What should we do if we do not have enough space for single occupancy, quarantine rooms and isolation rooms?

A: PDPH no longer has recommendations around single or double room occupancy, but single rooms should be considered for unvaccinated students, per CDC recommendations.

5. Q: Do students who have had COVID in the last 90 days need to quarantine if they are named as a close contact?

A: If a student has laboratory documentation of a COVID infection in the last 90 days (Antigen or PCR testing only) and has been named as a close contact to someone newly diagnosed with COVID, the student does not need to quarantine again. Students with a prior infection in the last 90 days who have been exposed should monitor for symptoms daily for 14 days. If the student becomes symptomatic, they should be isolated and evaluated for COVID reinfection and alternative diagnoses.

If there is no laboratory documentation (Antigen or PCR testing only) of that recent infection then the student should quarantine according to PDPH guidelines.

Please remember that antibody test results cannot be used to determine if a student had recent COVID infection in the last 90 days.

6. Do students who have been vaccinated need to quarantine?

A: If it has been at least 2 weeks since the student has received the final dose of their vaccination, then the student does not need to quarantine. If the student develops symptoms they should be tested and isolate as usual.

7. Q: Are the recommendations to house off-campus students who have come in contact suggestions or are we being required to do that?

A: Our current recommendation is that IHEs should offer their I&Q space to off-campus students who test COVID positive or if they are named as contacts as long as such rooms are available AND if the student does not have an alternate place to safely isolate or quarantine (i.e. their own home, a family member's home, etc.)

8. Q: Can students in quarantine go out to get something to eat?

A: Regardless of whether a student had COVID-19 infection and is in isolation or a COVID-19-exposed student is being quarantined, the goal is to separate the individual from others. Persons in isolation or quarantine should not leave their designated space. They should have meals delivered to their room. However, COVID-19-infected students can be cohorted together in a designated space if their interaction can be limited to only other infected students in isolation. Cohorting refers to the practice of isolating multiple individuals with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 together or quarantining close contacts of an infected person together as a group due to a limited number of individual cells. While cohorting those with confirmed COVID-19 is acceptable, cohorting individuals with suspected COVID-19 is not permitted due to high risk of transmission from infected to uninfected individuals. Persons in quarantine should have a private room with a private bathroom.

9. Q: If a student living in a multi person housing unit is exposed should we allow the roommates to remain together and isolated in that space together or find an individual room and bath for each of them?

A: It is our recommendation that you quarantine all exposed students individually in your designated quarantine space to avoid further exposures.

10. Q: Does a student need to be quarantined after test results or immediately once symptomatic?

A: Isolation means to separate an individual with an infectious illness from those who are healthy and have not been exposed to the contagion. Keeping sick people physically separated from others will help stop the spread of illness and protect healthy people from getting sick. People can be isolated at home or in a separate room in the hospital, depending on the severity of their illness and their need for medical care.

Quarantine is the physical separation of asymptomatic contacts (people who have been exposed to a contagious disease but are not ill). Quarantine may be voluntary, done at home, or done in another restricted area. Quarantine can be highly effective in protecting the public from disease. PDPH recommends that you isolate

symptomatic students immediately at the time of presentation and while awaiting test results.

In terms of quarantine, the PDPH acknowledge that IHEs may have additional information on individual cases that informs the quarantine of a suspected case's roommates and close contacts. The below quarantines apply to unvaccinated individuals.

- Student A has symptoms AND is a close contact to someone with COVID or part of an outbreak in the college community. Student A is waiting for test results.
 - Student A's roommates should quarantine while results pending.
 - Student A's close contacts should initiate quarantine if Student A's test result is positive
- Student B has symptoms. Student B is waiting for test results.
 - Student B's close contacts should initiate quarantine if Student B's test result is positive.
- Student C is a close contact with NO symptoms. Student C is waiting for test results.
 - Student C's close contacts should initiate quarantine if Student C's test result is positive.

11. Q: Should quarantine for students coming from high risk states and international travel be mandatory? (Updated March 2021)

A: The PADOH no longer requires quarantine after travel to another state. CDC guidance for quarantine after international travel should be followed. See the below links for more information:

- [After International Travel - CDC](#)
- [Requirement for Proof of Negative COVID-19 Test for All Air Passengers Arriving in the United States](#)

Contact Tracing

1. Q: Can you speak to when to begin contact tracing? Is it when a student presents with symptoms, especially when there are other cases on campus? What role will Philadelphia colleges play in contact tracing?

A: Contact tracing would begin after a diagnosis. If a student presents with COVID-19 symptoms we recommend that they get tested and begin to isolate immediately while awaiting results. Confirmed cases should be reported to PDPH so that contact tracing can be initiated.

Universities should have the ability to investigate and contact trace their own students, faculty and staff.

Universities should identify a PDPH liaison specific to COVID-19 who has the capability to quickly access student residence and contact information when exposures or outbreaks occur. This liaison should also be available to attend bi-weekly Contact Tracing Case Review Sessions with PDPH and other institutions in Philadelphia. Universities and colleges should plan to:

- Conduct a case investigation for any student who was on campus during their infectious period
- Make exposure notifications for individuals who attended class with a case during the case's infectious period
- Provide PDPH with contact information for individuals who PDPH is not able to reach
- Report cases to PDPH weekly and reach out more frequently if case counts are increasing or there are concerns about containment on your campus
- Implement proper infection control following exposures
- Rapidly notify PDPH of suspected problems with COVID-19 exposure or transmission
- Stay up to date with PDPH guidance on COVID-19 for university settings

2. Q: What information is the Health Department interested in collecting?

A: PDPH is currently investigating all cases in the City of Philadelphia.

Information on cases requested by the PDPH includes: Name, DOB, contact information, room/dorm/roommate assignments, contact information for any students that attended in person classes with a positive case, assistance with contact information for other close contacts that the positive case may not be able to fully identify or have contact information on.

PDPH can work with institutions to exchange information and asks that institutions require students to participate in case investigations completed by PDPH.

3. Q: How will this data be transmitted?

A: There are several ways that information can be transmitted:

- [This form](#) can be used to report test results to PDPH. This form should be used for rapid and PCR tests conducted on-campus.
- To report positives that students report to you, you can call the COVID hotline at 215-685-5488 (or after hours 1800-722-7112) and provide any information that you have. We can confirm that the case is in our system.
- Any health department employee in the COVID Containment division working on case investigations or contact tracing can receive the information. The PDPH can provide a 'university version' of the medical release letter we use for healthcare providers that describes PDPH's authority to collect the information.

- PDPH has a Partnerships Coordinator – Emily Klein (emily.klein@phila.gov) that will be a common liaison/contact for universities. PDPH developed an Excel template that can be used for reporting multiple cases. The information needed is:
 - Full name
 - DOB
 - Contact info (phone, email, address)
 - Date of symptom onset (for cases)
 - Specimen collection date
 - Any relevant information gathered through contact tracing

4. Q: Can you give a little more information on what the state app will do? And clarification on what you mean by "commit to using it on our campuses?"

A: It's an exposure notification app that uses Bluetooth technology that triggers an automatic alert if a user has come into close contact with a verified COVID positive case during the infectious period. A campus's commitment could come in different forms depending on their specific situation, ranging from promotional strategies to mandated app use. Widespread use of an exposure notification app may be beneficial for controlling disease spread.

5. Q: Do we have to provide names/numbers for those who help students move in for tracing purposes?

A: Internal record keeping is encouraged so that if a case does emerge, we can act quickly.

6. Q: In addition to regularly reporting all test results for students, when should we notify PDPH of cases that are connected to a cluster? (Updated 1/25/2021)

A: If you identify 5 epidemiologically-linked cases within a 14 day period, you should notify PDPH immediately. You can do this by sending an e-mail to emily.klein@phila.gov with the following information:

- # of cases detected
- # of individuals in quarantine
- Affiliation with organization (i.e. Greek life, athletics)
- Suspected mode of transmission (i.e. party, small gathering, sports game/practice, meal, large event)
- Whether majority of cases detected live on or off campus
- 1-2 sentences about plans for containing it (i.e. quarantine plans, additional testing, more intensive contact tracing)

Please send weekly updates on the cluster until it is contained.

Housing

- 1. Q: Can you define congregate housing? Does this include apartment living or off-campus houses with multiple students?**

A: Congregate housing is considered shared housing and includes a broad range of settings, including dormitories and fraternity and sorority houses. You may be aware of other houses that are part of your communities where large numbers of students live together. Masking is not required in college or university congregate housing.

- 2. Q: Should student lounges or recreation rooms be fully closed or just have limited occupancy? (Updated 6/14/2021)**

A: Based on current PDPH guidance, indoor gathering spaces may be open at full occupancy.

Dining and Cleaning

- 1. Q: What are the current recommendations for dining halls? (updated 6/14/2021)**

A: IHEs can allow indoor dining within dining halls on campus at full capacity.

- 2. Q: For IHEs that are operating outdoor tents to expand seating, what is the recommended occupancy? (Updated 6/14/2021)**

A: If a structure has more than two sides, it will be considered indoor dining. Seating capacity of interior and exterior dining combined may not exceed premise's capacity stated on City-issued food license. Any heating equipment must comply with the Philadelphia Fire Code. Please see additional [Outdoor Dining Guidelines](#).

- 3. Q: Does PDPH have a threshold of cases in one of our spaces that would have us close a building to clean for a set time?**

A: PDPH does not have specific guidelines for closing an entire building.

Athletics and Student Life

- 1. Q: What is the guidance for IHE libraries?**

A: There is no current COVID specific library requirements.

- 2. Q: Are intramural and club sports permitted?**

A: Yes, all sports are now permitted. All persons, including athletes, coaches, officials, and anyone else present, must adhere to the following masking protocols:

- Indoor and outdoor sports: unvaccinated individuals must wear at all times, regardless of distancing.
- Vaccinated individuals no longer need to be masked.

3. Q: Are spectators allowed at sports competitions? (Updated 6/14/2021)

A: Spectators are permitted. Schools should follow PDPH and PA guidance for events.

4. Q: How does the event size guidance affect indoor spaces such as classrooms? (Updated 6/14/21)

A: The order for distancing has expired so distancing is no longer required in classrooms.

5. Q: Are social gatherings allowed? (6/14/ 2021)

A: There are no further distancing or density restrictions on social gatherings.

6. Q: What are the testing requirements for intercollegiate athletes?

A: Unvaccinated intercollegiate athletes should be tested three times a week and continue masking when within 6 feet of others for every sport, regardless of NCAA risk level. Vaccinated individuals no longer need to be masked or participate in surveillance testing.

Ventilation

1. Q: What is the PDPH guidance around building ventilation regarding COVID?

A: Please find the information linked [here](#). CDC recommendations are linked [here](#).

2. Q: There are many concerns about HVAC, is there any technology we can utilize for airflow?

A: The following information comes from CDC and can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html>

- Consider taking steps to improve ventilation in the building, in consultation with an HVAC professional, based on local environmental conditions (temperature/humidity) and ongoing community transmission in the area:
- Increase the percentage of outdoor air
- Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, if possible.
- Disable demand-control ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.
- Consider using natural ventilation (i.e., opening windows if possible and safe to do so) to increase outdoor air dilution of indoor air when environmental conditions and building requirements allow.

- Improve central air filtration:
 - Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly diminishing design airflow.
 - Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass.
 - Consider running the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after occupied times, in accordance with industry standards.
 - Generate clean-to-less-clean air movements by re-evaluating the positioning of supply and exhaust air diffusers and/or dampers and adjusting zone supply and exhaust flow rates to establish measurable pressure differentials. Have staff work in “clean” ventilation zones that do not include higher-risk areas such as visitor reception or exercise facilities (if open).
 - Consider using portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning (especially in higher-risk areas).
 - Ensure exhaust fans in restroom facilities are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.
 - Consider using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplemental technique to inactivate potential airborne virus in the upper-room air of common occupied spaces, in accordance with industry guidelines.

Miscellaneous

1. Q: Are college tours allowed? (6/14/2021)

A: Tours are permitted. Encourage vaccination for anyone participating in tours

2. Q: Is there guidance around managing student Emotional Support Animals/pets?

A: The CDC has issued guidance [here](#).

3. Q: Are Philadelphia universities expected to have pandemic officers?

A: The PDPH expects regular communication between universities and the health department. The PDPH prefers there was a single person or office at the IHE to be the contact for all communication.

4. Q: Is a comprehensive plan required for satellite class only locations that utilize office space if the main campus is outside of Philadelphia?

A: The PDPH asks that IHEs with only satellite campuses in Philadelphia follow our guidelines. A submission of a comprehensive plan is not required.

5. **Q: Since we are a college town, has the City considered targeted messaging about key mitigation behaviors of college students so we can potentially have a united front?**

A: The PDPH will be happy to provide the city's messaging images to our universities. The PDPH can send out media kits to colleges.

6. **Q: Do the health departments from different counties speak to each other? If an IHE employee lives in Montgomery County, will Mont. Co. notify the school or PDPH?**

A: The PDPH does communicate around contact tracing because cases and exposures may cross county lines. However, the other counties may not have the same level of engagement with their IHEs so it is not certain that the PDPH would be notified of an employee of a Philadelphia IHE who lives in another county.

7. **Q: How are schools managing elevators and social distancing?**

A: There are no longer distancing recommendations.

8. **Q: Can individuals take their masks off in cubicles? (Updated 6/16/2021)**

A: Unvaccinated people should continue to mask indoors unless in an office with closed doors. Vaccinated people are not required to mask indoors.

9. **Q: How should we handle students who receive a vaccine that is not authorized by the United States FDA?**

A: As additional vaccines continue to become available, institutions will need to make ongoing decisions about which vaccines are acceptable. In addition to [FDA authorization](#), the World Health Organization (WHO) has a list of vaccines that have been authorized for emergency use, [which can be found at this link](#).

The city of Philadelphia considers anyone who has completed a series with any of the vaccine the are Emergency Use Listed by the WHO to be full vaccinated once two weeks have elapsed from the final dose in the series.