Novel Coronavirus – Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Planning for Institutions of Higher Education

Table of Contents

I.   GENERAL INFORMATION

What is Novel Coronavirus?

The disease called COVID-19 is caused by a novel (new) coronavirus this means the virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

Signs and Symptoms

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Incubation period

Ranges from 2-14 days

Contagious Period and Spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

There is not enough information about the transmission of the virus to completely understand when a patient can spread the virus to others.

Treatment

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. For severe cases, treatment should include care to support vital organ functions.

Control Measures of Spread:

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

II.   GENERAL MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Educate students and staff to:

- Cough or sneeze into their sleeved arm or cover their nose and mouth with a tissue. Throw away the tissue after they use it and wash hands
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth
- Wash their hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze; an alcohol-based hand rub can be used if soap and water are not nearby
- Avoid sharing cups and eating utensils with others
- Increase deep cleaning to at least 2 times per week and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces like doorknobs, tables, drinking fountains and handrails. Regular cleaning products can be used. For an additional list of recommended products visit: https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf

See CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfectant recommendations: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html

- Students or staff with fever or respiratory symptoms should stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (without use of fever-reducing medicine), runny nose or productive cough and other symptoms are improving.

III.   HIGHER EDUCATION GUIDANCE

a. Prepare

- **Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation.** Know where to turn for reliable, up-to-date information in your local community. Monitor the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment website](#), the [CDC COVID-19 website](#) and your local local health agency websites for the latest information. The Colorado Department of Higher Education has created a [webpage](#) with these and other resources.
- **Develop, or review, your campus' emergency operations plan.** Ensure your institution has a plan that includes strategies to reduce the spread of disease and establishes mechanisms for ongoing communication with staff, students, volunteers, and the community. This should be done in collaboration with local public health agencies and other relevant partners.
  - Consider including additional guidance related to congregate settings for students who depend on student housing and food services. Develop contingency plans for students who utilize dining hall services, including the potential for distribution of pre-packed goods.
- **Establish relationships with your local [public health agency](#).** Make sure you know about healthcare and public health emergency planning and response activities in your community and establish open lines of communication.

b. Consider Online Instruction and Be Prepared for a Partial or Full Campus Closure

- **Institutions in urban areas or in counties with outbreaks:** Consider Suspending Face-to-Face Classroom teaching immediately or following Spring Break and teach students remotely for the remainder of the current term.
  - Encourage students to travel home following Spring Break.
  - Ensure students who are unable to travel home (including international students) have continued access to dormitory housing, food services, and other services.

- Provide a system for students who remain on campus to register with the institution.
- Ensure that your health clinic remains open and accessible to students.
- Consider how to accommodate classroom activities that typically include laboratories or other in-person interactions.
- Ensure that students have access to technology required for distance learning.

- **Institutions in rural communities without current cases or outbreaks**: Continue with general mitigation strategies and be prepared to move to online instruction. Ensure your plan considers the need for a partial or full closure of your campus, due to infected students or faculty/staff and how instruction could be continued online.
  - Identify trigger events that, in consultation with local public health agencies, would cause a partial or full closure of your campus.
  - Consider asking faculty to prepare now for online instruction.
  - Monitor guidance from the Department of Higher Education, the Higher Learning Commission and other relevant organizations about how to deal with scenarios in which students are unable to complete their courses.
  - Consider options now for online instruction and other alternative learning opportunities to ensure continuity of instruction.
    - It is important to use an equity lens when making these plans, as not all students have access to technology. In some cases, it may make more sense to cancel classes all together rather than deploying an alternative model that can be accessed by some, but not all, students.

c. Travel Policies
- Continue to monitor the CDC's Travel Health Notices and create a plan for supporting students and staff in affected areas.
- Consider postponing or canceling study abroad programs as well as faculty-led programs and other programs abroad.
  - Institutions of Higher Education should **consider** asking current program participants to return to their home institution. Those overseeing student international travel programs should be aware that students may face unpredictable circumstances, travel restrictions, challenges in returning home or accessing health care while abroad.
- **Provide recommendations and up-to-date information for students who may consider traveling during school breaks.**

- o Consider requiring students and staff/faculty to self-quarantine or self-isolate if they travel abroad or to a region of concern in the United States during spring break.
- **Consider restricting faculty and staff travel.**
  - o No travel should be allowed to countries with widespread community transmission and there are restrictions on entry to the United States for citizens of several countries.
  - o Consider restricting all travel abroad to essential travel only requiring an extra level of approval.
  - o Consider restricting domestic travel to essential travel only requiring an extra level of approval.
  - o Discourage personal international travel.

d. Events

- **Consider restricting any large events.** No new non-essential large events should be scheduled through the current term. For events already scheduled, encourage organizers to consider postponing or canceling.

e. Other Steps to Take Immediately

- **Build relationships with key community organizations and partners who may be impacted by your campus' closure.**
- **Create an emergency contact list for key partners, including state agencies and your local public health agency.**
- **Develop a communications plan** that outlines how you plan to reach different audiences including ensuring all communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate as well as accessible for individuals with disabilities.
- **Discourage visitors** to your campus.
- **Assess possible impacts to other services and on campus.** If your institution also operates a childcare facility, workforce center, health center, restaurant, religious services, and/or other social services, you will need to consider the impacts of an outbreak or closure on any individuals who are employed in these settings, or are customers, clients, patients, or utilizers of these services.
- **Consider High Risk Individuals on your Campus** Inform employees that some people may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as those over 60, immune-compromised or those with chronic medical conditions. Identify these individuals and plan to accommodate their work.
- **Monitor and plan for absenteeism.** A COVID-19 outbreak in your community could lead to staff and student absenteeism. Prepare alternative staffing plans to ensure as many of your facility's staff are available as possible. Proactively provide alternatives for students who may need to miss classes due to

quarantine or isolation activities to ensure their adherence to public health guidance and protocol

f. Communicate

- **Communicate about COVID-19 with your staff.** Share information about what is currently known about COVID-19 and your facility's preparedness plans. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has updated messaging.
- **Communicate about COVID-19 with students and families.** Provide updates about changes to your policies or operations. Use all communication channels that you have available including your email, university/college news, website, letters, and social media to share updates. Make sure to plan ahead for linguistic needs of the student population. **Communication with the larger community and other impacted individuals**. Once you have assessed the impacts to other services within your institution (e.g. onsite childcare), make sure you develop a specific communication outreach plan to ensure the individuals most impacted by your decision or closure receive the information they need. Proactively identify and meet any needs for language assistance through the translation of materials or interpretation services.
- **Maintain up to date information on your institution's website regarding procedures for access health facilities on campus.**
- **Intentionally and persistently combat stigma.** Misinformation about coronavirus and COVID-19 can create fear and hostility that hurts people and makes it harder to keep everyone healthy.

g. Testing for COVID-19

If a faculty, staff member or student believes they should be evaluated for COVID-19

- If individuals have fever, cough or shortness of breath and have not been around anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID19, they should stay home away from others until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (without use of fever-reducing medicine), runny nose or productive cough and other symptoms are improving.
- If an individual believes they have had close contact to someone with COVID-19 but are not currently sick, they should monitor their health for fever, cough, and shortness of breath during the 14 days after the last day they were in close contact with the sick person with COVID-19. They should not go to work or school, and should avoid public places for 14 days. If the individual develops symptoms, they should **call** the school clinic or a local health provider. If your campus clinic sees a student who they believe might have COVID-19, the clinic should immediately notify your local public health agency. **Your local public health agency will provide you with guidance.**

h. If you Have a Confirmed Case

If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the community or at your campus:

- **Work in close collaboration and coordination with local and state health officials and other health care and public health partners in your community to make decisions regarding measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19.**

- **Implement social distancing measures.** If there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, consider using social distancing rather than closing facilities until there is evidence that a case is associated with your institution in some way. Examples of social distancing include staggering class times or canceling large conferences and sporting events.

- **Communicate about potential exposure to COVID-19.** It is critical to maintain confidentiality of the individual while working to address potential fear and anxiety of students and staff.

- **Determine if, when, and for how long it may be appropriate to dismiss classes or close.** In consultation with your local public health agency, determine the extent of the risk and appropriate responses.
    - If there is a confirmed infection in a staff or student, and that individual was at school or school facility while symptomatic, then the IHE should close to allow time for cleaning of the facility and contact investigation by local public health.
    - Seek guidance from local health officials about the need to lengthen facility closures or resuming normal operations.
    - It is not recommended to preemptively close facilities for cleaning if there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 associated with the facility.