



Coronavirus Disease 2019

COVID-19

Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education
Issued April 28, 2020

This guidance provides further information to Colorado postsecondary institutions on implementing Executive Order D 2020 044, issued by Governor Polis on Sunday, April 26, 2020, and the accompanying Public Health Order 20-28. Those orders together are referred in this document as Safer at Home. This guidance for higher education institutions, issued on April 27, replaces updated guidance that the Colorado Department of Higher Education issued on April 22, 2020. This guidance is valid for 30 days or until modified or extended.

In as much as Executive Order D 2020 044 encompasses all entities in Colorado, this guidance is intended for all postsecondary institutions, irrespective of their authorizing agency. Those that are authorized by the Colorado Department of Higher Education include public institutions; private degree-granting and religious institutions authorized under §23-2-101 et seq.; and private occupational schools authorized under §23-64-101. Technical Colleges that are part of a school district should follow this guidance and guidance issued through the Colorado Department of Education. Postsecondary institutions not authorized through the Colorado Department of Higher Education should similarly follow this guidance as well as guidance from their authorizing entity. Institutions can contact the Colorado Department of Higher Education at COVID19@dhe.state.co.us for further information.

Background

In response to the presence of coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) in Colorado, the Governor declared a disaster emergency to protect the health and safety of Coloradans on March 10, 2020. On March 18, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment issued Public Health Order 20-23 requiring social distancing measures and limiting in-person gatherings to no more than 10 people. On March 25, the Governor issued Executive Order D 2020 017 ordering Coloradans to stay at home. On April 26, the Governor issued Executive Order D 2020 044 continuing stay at home requirements for vulnerable individuals, allowing some Coloradans to return to work while maintaining a sustainable level of social distancing.

With the Governor's March 25 Executive Order and the accompanying April 1 Public Health Order 20-24 directing Coloradans to Stay At Home, institutions transitioned fully to remote instructional delivery and most institutions that are on a traditional semester schedule instructed students not to return to campus for the remainder of the semester. With this Safer at Home executive order, institutions are permitted to offer face-to-face instruction in limited cases after informing the Colorado Department of Higher Education.

HIGHER EDUCATION DIRECTIVES

Continue remote instruction

Postsecondary institutions including private colleges and universities and private occupational schools are not permitted to offer **face-to-face classroom teaching**, other than the limited exceptions noted below, for 30 days from April 27, unless extended further by Executive Order or further guidance is issued.

Institutions should make every effort to provide remote learning options to students enabling them to continue their academic programs.

Institutions should further:

- Require students to stay at home.
- Ensure that students who are unable to travel home (including international students) have continued access to residence halls or other campus housing, food services, and other essential services.
- Food should be provided on a "Grab and Go" basis only, with no individuals allowed to congregate.
- Provide a system for students who remain on campus to register with the institution and to receive emergency alerts and notifications.
- Ensure students and staff comply with social distancing requirements at all times.
- Ensure that students have access to an institution or other local health clinic.
- Assist students with technology required for distance learning.
- Continue closure of all recreational services, including gymnasiums.

Exceptions

Institutions may, but are not required to, provide in-person classroom or laboratory instruction in **programs and courses that cannot be taught remotely**.

- Prior to beginning instruction, institutions must submit information to the Colorado Department of Higher Education and receive an acknowledgement of receipt for any courses/programs that they intend to provide using in-person instruction (link to form below).
 - The information must be submitted by the institution chief executive officer (president, chancellor, director) or person authorized by the chief executive officer to submit the form.
- Using the form in the link below, institutions must provide the following information:
 - 1) Name and brief description of each course/program;
 - 2) Begin and end dates for the course(s)/program(s);
 - 3) The number of students the institution expects to have in the course(s)/program(s);
 - 4) The reason the course(s)/program(s) cannot be taught remotely;

- 5) A description of how the institution intends to meet COVID-19 mitigation requirements contained in CDPHE guidance (see additional details [here](#)), including the following:
- Maintain 6-foot social distancing requirements;
 - Classrooms and equipment will undergo regular deep cleaning;
 - Classrooms will have signage on hygiene and safety measures;
 - Ensure ventilation of classroom and office spaces meets OSHA guidance;
 - Limit class sizes to no more than 10 individuals inclusive of students and instructor(s) at any given time;
 - Limit, wherever possible, the sharing of equipment and other resources;
 - Restrict group gatherings outside of classes, social or otherwise, unless pre-approved;
 - Implement symptom monitoring protocols;
 - Implement protocols for symptomatic students, faculty or staff.
- Upon submitting the information, institutions will attest to meeting all required mitigation strategies.
 - Students must be allowed to opt out of the in-person instruction; such students will be treated no differently than students in all other courses that have ceased in-person instruction due to the COVID-19 situation;
 - **NOTE:** Institutions which previously implemented in-person medical instruction under the exception allowed under the Third Updated Public Health Order 20-24 issued on April 1, 2020 or any other in-person instruction that has been allowed under previous executive orders and public health orders should submit information about those courses/programs using the link below.

Click [HERE](#) for attestation form to provide in-person instruction for limited programs/courses

If remote instruction is not an option for a course and an institution opts to suspend classes:

- ensure that students are provided the option to discontinue their studies without facing any academic penalty; and
- in the event the course cannot be completed at a later date, provide a means by which students can seek a reasonable tuition refund or credit consistent with the institutions' policy in light of COVID-19 and the student's enrollment agreement or handbook.

Continue to monitor guidance from the U.S. Department of Higher Education (see <https://ifap.ed.gov/electronic-announcements/030520Guidance4interruptionsrelated2CoronavirusCOVID19>), the Higher Learning Commission (see <https://www.hlcommission.org/General/coronavirus-updates.html>), and other relevant organizations about how to deal with scenarios in which students are unable to complete their courses.

With limited exceptions, continue to close campuses to all but essential personnel and activities

Essential functions for postsecondary educational institutions include:

- police and campus security;
- janitorial, maintenance, and facilities services;
- medical and mental health services;
- legal services necessary to comply with applicable law;
- housing and food services;
- critical research;
- providing care to animals that may be in labs;
- financial services, including payroll and necessary contracts;
- in-person instruction for certain courses and programs as noted above; and
- IT support and computer services to support distance learning and the above in person instruction.

To support the above functions, **critical personnel include:**

- The minimum number of staff required to maintain housing, food and health services for students remaining on campus.
- Non-instructional faculty and staff involved in critical research as noted above and as referenced in Public Health Order 20-24. In determining what is critical research, institutions should consider whether the research is supporting the public health and safety of Coloradans. Institutions should take into account the personal protective equipment required to carry out such research, and ensure that it is being used for the most urgent needs.
- The minimum janitorial, maintenance and facilities services staff required to maintain a safe and clean campus for remaining students and other essential personnel.
- Information technology personnel required to maintain and secure technology infrastructure, including that needed to support remote instruction.
- Faculty and students participating in in-person courses in n-person instruction as noted under “exceptions” above (or otherwise explicitly permitted by executive order or public health order), and personnel required to support those activities.
- Instructional faculty other than those teaching courses covered by the exception above (or otherwise explicitly permitted by executive order or public health order) are not considered critical, however faculty with no alternative may be permitted to access campus for short periods of time allowing them to offer remote courses; they must comply with social distancing requirements at all times.

Personnel must comply with social distancing requirements at all times.

In addition to the above essential functions and personnel, postsecondary institutions are permitted to allow students to return for the limited purpose of clearing out their dorm rooms. Institutions should schedule such visits in a manner to comply with social distancing requirements.

Implement Strict Travel Policies

- Continue to monitor the [CDC's Travel Health Notices](#) to support students and staff with family in affected areas.
- **Cancel study abroad programs** as well as faculty-led programs and other programs abroad.
- **Discourage students from traveling anywhere other than home upon discontinuing classroom delivery.**
- **Prohibit faculty and staff travel.**
 - Prohibit all employee travel without approval by the head of the institution.
 - Discourage personal travel.
 - Inform faculty, staff and students of requirements to self-isolate or quarantine if they travel.
 - <https://covid19.colorado.gov/isolation-and-quarantine>

No Public Events

- **Gatherings and events are not allowed:** Public Health Order 20-29 prohibits public and private gatherings of more than 10 individuals occurring outside of a residence.

Other Steps to Take Immediately

- **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 health agency websites for the latest information. The Colorado Department of Higher Education has created a [webpage](#) with these and other resources.
- **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.
- **Communicate**
 - **Communicate about COVID-19 with your staff.** Share information about what is currently known about COVID-19. See the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment for 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.
 - Communicate with the Colorado Department of Higher Education with any questions or concerns.
 - **Communication with the larger community and other impacted individuals.**
 - **Maintain up to date information on your institution's website regarding procedures for access health facilities on campus, if open.**
 - **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.

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.
- 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 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.**

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.**
- **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.
 - Seek guidance from local health officials about the need to lengthen facility closures.

Refer to PHO [Guidance](#) and [FAQs](#) for further information and recommendations.