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TO: Institutions of Higher Education

FROM: California Department of Public Health

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SUBJECT: Higher Education Guidance on Novel Coronavirus or COVID-19

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

This document is intended to be statewide guidance to help both school and public health officials inform their decision making. Decisions by school officials and local public health officials should be determined by the specific circumstances in local jurisdictions.

## Background

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel virus that has been spreading worldwide. Community-acquired cases have now been confirmed in California. We are gaining more understanding of COVID-19's epidemiology, clinical course, immunogenicity, and other factors as time progresses, and the situation is changing daily. CDPH is in the process of monitoring COVID-19, conducting testing with local and federal partners, and providing guidance and resources to prevent, detect and respond to the occurrence of COVID-19 cases in California.

At this time, community transmission of COVID-19 has occurred in California. Educational institutions should prepare for possible impacts of COVID-19 and take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as other infectious diseases, including influenza and gastroenteritis.

## Illness Severity

The complete clinical picture with regard to COVID-19 is not fully understood. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild to severe, including illness resulting in death. Older people and people with certain underlying health conditions like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example, seem to be at greater risk of serious illness.



Below CDPH outlines four (4) scenarios that should be considered by each campus in order to protect students, faculty, and staff.

**Scenario I: Measures already underway to prevent the spread of COVID-19.**

Pursuant to prior guidance released, campus administrators have or should immediately take steps to slow the spread of respiratory infectious diseases, including COVID-19. CDPH has recommended implementing the following steps:

- Review and update emergency operations plans (EOPs), including continuity plans for teaching and learning if students are excluded from campus.
- Exclude students, faculty, or staff who have a travel history over the course of the last 14 days to an area identified by the CDC as Level 3 Travel Health Notice (see [CDC's Evaluating and Reporting Persons Under Investigation](#)). Additionally, exclude those who have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 from the campus for 14 days from the day of their last exposure.
- Send students, faculty, and staff who present with fever and/or respiratory infection symptoms home immediately. When feasible, identify a “sick room” through which others do not regularly pass.
  - Separate the individual as much as possible from others and make arrangements for the individual to go home as soon as possible, and
  - If the institution is a college or university and the individual resides in a group setting, make arrangements for the individual to be placed in a private room with a private bathroom.
- Encourage flu vaccine for those who have not had it this season.
- Develop a communications plan to use with the campus community.
- Contact your county emergency operations center if it has been established or your local public health department immediately if you notice any concerning clusters of respiratory disease or spikes in absenteeism. For contact information, please search the local public health department website.
- Encourage all students, faculty, and staff to take everyday preventive actions:
  - Stay home when sick.
    - Remain at home or in your dorm until fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
    - Seek immediate medical care if symptoms become more severe, e.g., high fever or difficulty breathing.

- Use “respiratory etiquette”.
  - Cover cough with a tissue or sleeve. See [CDC’s Cover Your Cough page](#) for multilingual posters and flyers, posted at the bottom of the webpage.
  - Provide adequate supplies within easy reach, including tissues and no-touch trash cans.
- Wash hands frequently.
  - Encourage hand washing by students and staff through education, scheduled time for handwashing, and the provision of adequate supplies.
  - Provide alcohol based hand sanitizers to supplement hand washing.
- Enhance cleaning consistent with CDC guidance.

**Scenario II: Measures to be taken if there are two or more community transmission cases of COVID-19, but no staff or students test positive.**

If the local public health department has confirmed **two or more** community transmission cases, but no individuals (staff or students) at campus have tested positive for COVID-19, in addition to the items outlined in Phase I, CDPH recommends campus administrators implement the following steps:

- Faculty and staff with any fever and/or respiratory infection symptoms should not be at work. Faculty and staff should self-screen (check themselves for subjective fever and/or respiratory symptoms such as cough) for respiratory infection symptoms each morning before interacting with students.
  - Ensure sick leave policies allow faculty and staff to stay home if they have symptoms of respiratory infection.
- Limit visitors to the campus by not allowing those with symptoms of fever and/or respiratory infection or who have a travel history over the course of the last 14 days to an area identified by the CDC as Level 3 Travel Health Notice.
- Consider alternates to congregate programming within the campus including any large or communal activities.

**Scenario III: Measures to be taken if one student, teacher or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and exposed others on campus.**

If one student, faculty or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, and exposed others on campus CDPH recommends that campus administrators implement the following steps:

- Isolate the student, faculty or staff and immediately contact your local public health department immediately.
- If the student, faculty or staff lives on campus in a congregate setting isolate the individual in consultation with the local public health department.
- Develop communication plans for campus closure to include outreach to students, faculty, staff, and the community.
- Provide guidance to students, faculty and staff reminding them of the importance of community social distancing measures while campus is closed, including discouraging students or staff from gathering elsewhere. Community social distancing measures include canceling group activities or events, religious services, after-campus classes and sporting events.
- Consider developing a plan for continuity of education, medical and social services, and meal programs and establish alternate mechanisms for these to continue.
- Maintain regular communications with the local public health department.
- Consult CDC guidelines to determine what additional cleaning protocols, if any, should be deployed at the campus prior to reopening the campus.
- Determine the timing of return of students and staff, and any additional steps needed for the campus to reopen, in consultation with the local public health department.

**Scenario IV: Measures to be taken if multiple students, teachers or staff members test positive for COVID-19 on a campus.**

If more than five students, faculty, or staff on a campus test positive for COVID-19, the campus administrator should consult with local public health officials for guidance on closing the campus.

- In consultation with the local public health department, the campus administrator may determine campus closure and what length of time is warranted based on the

risk level within the specific community as determined by the local public health officer.

- Develop communication plans for campus closure to include outreach to students, faculty, staff, and the community.
- Provide guidance to students, faculty and staff reminding them of the importance of community social distancing measures while campus is closed, including discouraging students or staff from gathering elsewhere. Community social distancing measures include canceling group activities or events, religious services, after-campus classes and sporting events.
- Consider developing a plan for continuity of education, medical and social services, and meal programs and establish alternate mechanisms for these to continue.
- Maintain regular communications with the local public health department.
- Work with the local public health department to determine what additional cleaning protocols, if any, should be deployed at the campus prior to reopening the campus.
- Determine the timing of return of students and staff, and any additional steps needed for the campus to reopen, in consultation with the local public health department.

Please note that there have been reports of students and others being stigmatized. We urge institutions to ensure students' and staffs' privacy to help prevent discrimination.

### **Additional Resources.**

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website](#)
- [California Department of Public Health Website](#)