

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

Recent Updates: (Changes highlighted in yellow)

2/20/2021: Clarified that vaccinated individuals who are a close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 case and meet specific criteria outlined in the exposure management plan are not required to quarantine.

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:* Adequate supply of housing for students and faculty to safely isolate or quarantine when needed.
- ☐ *Required:* A plan for all students and employees who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection or are quarantined because of exposure to case(s) on campus to have access to testing or be tested for COVID-19 infection.

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). 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).
- 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>. 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. 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 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](#). The notification of exposure should include the following messages:

- Students and employees with exposure to a campus case should test for COVID-19, whether or not they have symptoms, 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. 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 should 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), even if they receive a negative test result during their quarantine period. If they remain asymptomatic, they are released from quarantine after Day 10 but must continue to monitor their health and strictly adhere to COVID-19 prevention precautions through Day 14. Note: a person who tests negative may subsequently develop disease, with or without symptoms, if tested during the incubation period (i.e. time period between exposure and disease onset). Home Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 is available at: ph.lacounty.gov/covidquarantine.
- **NOTE: Vaccinated persons who are a close contact to a confirmed case are not required to quarantine and test for COVID-19 if they meet all of the following criteria: (1) are fully vaccinated (i.e., ≥2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose COVID-19 vaccine series or ≥2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine) and (2) are within 3 months following receipt of the last dose in the series and (3) have remained asymptomatic since last contact with the infected person.**
- 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 spread of COVID-19. A general notification letter template is available at: [COVID-19 Template Notification Letters for Education Settings](#).

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>. 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.
 - If outbreak criteria are not met, IHE continues with routine exposure management.
 - If outbreak criteria are met, a DPH outbreak investigation is activated.
 - A public health investigator is assigned to coordinate with the IHE on outbreak management for the duration of the outbreak investigation.

COVID-19 Outbreak Criteria for Institutes of Higher Education

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>Required:</i> IHE instructs the case to follow Home Isolation Instructions.2) <i>Required:</i> IHE informs case that DPH will contact the case directly to collect additional information and issue Health Officer Order for Isolation.3) <i>Required:</i> IHE works with the case to identify IHE contacts with exposure.4) <i>Required:</i> IHE notifies* identified contacts of exposure and instructs them to quarantine at home and test for COVID-19. NOTE: Vaccinated persons who have an exposure but meet specific criteria outlined in the Exposure Management Plan are not required to quarantine and test for COVID-19.5) <i>Required:</i> IHE informs contacts that DPH will contact them directly to collect additional information and issue Health Officer Order for Quarantine.6) <i>Required:</i> 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) <i>Recommended:</i> IHE sends general notification* to inform the relevant campus community of the exposure and precautions being taken to prevent spread. <p>*Templates for exposure notification and general notification are available at: COVID-19 Template Notification Letters for Education Settings.</p>
2 Cases	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>Required:</i> Follow steps for 1 confirmed case.2) <i>Recommended:</i> 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>Required:</i> If a cluster of 3 or more cases occurred within 14 days of each other, IHE report this immediately to DPH.2) <i>Required:</i> 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.3) <i>Required:</i> IHE provides updates to OMB investigator until outbreak is resolved.