

Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Department of Higher Education
Public Health Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education Related to COVID-19
March 17, 2020

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) and the Department Public Health (DPH) are issuing the following guidance to help prevent and reduce the spread of the coronavirus known as COVID-19. **This public health emergency guidance applies to all public and private Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) in the Commonwealth.**

This guidance is current as of March 17, 2020.

DHE and DPH strongly recommend that colleges and universities, both public and private, continue to pursue strategies to reduce the need for students to be on campus, including suspending in-person classes and implementing institution-wide programs to shift to remote learning, technology enabled solutions, and other learning modalities to allow students to successfully complete course and degree requirements. Institutions should also pursue strategies to reduce the need for faculty and staff to be on campus by maximizing remote work opportunities, while maintaining essential on-campus services, especially for residential students who cannot safely return home.

Immediate Steps:

- IHEs should **continue to explore the expansion of remote learning and technology solutions to minimize the need for students, staff and faculty to be on campus**; and create individual plans as needed to enable remote learning and technology solutions for those at [higher risk](#) due to a medical condition or other reason.
- All institutions must **implement policies on expanded environmental cleaning**, whether there has been a known case of COVID-19 on the campus or not. Institutions

must clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily using an [EPA-registered disinfectant](#).

Additional Guidance Available for Coronavirus-Related Situations IHEs May Encounter

Please continue to consult the [CDC website](#) for Resources for Institutes of Higher Education, including the [interim guidance for administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education](#), in addition to this guidance, as the situation is rapidly changing.

Seek Board of Health and Department of Public Health Advice for all Scenarios

If an IHE needs assistance to make decisions in any of the Scenarios below, please call your local Board of Health. If your local Board of Health is not able to assist within three hours of contacting them, please contact the Department of Public Health’s Epidemiology Line at 617-983-6800. If DPH is not able to assist within three hours of contacting them, IHE leadership and COVID-19 points of contact are advised to contact their segmental offices.

For all of the following Scenarios, “[close contact](#)” means:

- Is living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, **OR**
- Caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, **OR**
- Being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for about 15 minutes, **OR**
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 (e.g. being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.).

Scenario 1: Individuals who have NOT been in [close contact](#) with a positive case, AND who show no signs or symptoms of illness.

- These individuals may continue to be on campus, at the campus’s discretion, provided social distancing can be maintained.

Scenario 2: Individuals who have been in [close contact](#) with a person who tested positive for COVID-19, but have not tested positive themselves.

- These individuals will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days. (**NOTE:** If an individual in Scenario 2 resides on campus, see Scenario 4.) In general, those in self-quarantine who have not developed symptoms are not considered a high risk for transmission of the virus. These individuals may return to campus once the 14-day self-quarantine period has ended, as advised by the local Board of Health.
- The affected areas of the campus should be cleaned, during which time the affected areas of the campus should be closed for that purpose for as long as is necessary to complete the cleaning. Institutions should follow the [CDC guidance](#) for cleaning and disinfection.

Scenario 3: A student, staff or faculty member has tested positive for COVID-19, and is NOT currently residing in a residence hall.

- The individual who tested positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate at home. The individual may not return to the campus until they are authorized to leave their home by the local Board of Health. This will often require receiving two negative test results before being cleared from isolation.
- If the individual has been in close contact with other students, staff or faculty members while symptomatic or was active on campus immediately prior to the diagnosis, IHE leadership should consult with the local Board of Health who will provide guidance on the appropriate action for the campus to take. If the IHE has multiple campus locations, decisions should be made on a campus-by-campus basis. Additional guidance is available on the [CDC website](#).

Scenario 4: A student, staff or faculty member has tested positive for COVID-19 and IS currently residing in a residence hall.

According to [CDC guidance](#) as of **March 17, 2020**:

- Individuals with COVID-19 may need to be moved to temporary housing locations. These individuals will need to isolate and monitor for worsening symptoms according to the guidance of your local Board of Health.
- Close contacts of the individuals with COVID-19 may also need temporary housing so that they can self-quarantine and monitor for symptoms. Consult with the local Board of Health to determine when, how, and where to move ill residents. Information on providing home care to individuals with COVID-19 who do not require hospitalization is available on [CDC's website](#).
- Residents identified with COVID-19 or identified as contacts of individuals with COVID-19 should not necessarily be sent to their permanent homes off-campus. Sending sick residents to their permanent homes could be unfeasible, pose logistical challenges, or pose risk of transmission to others either on the way to the home or once there. IHEs should work with the local Board of Health to determine appropriate housing for the period in which they need to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms or worsening symptoms.

IHE leadership should consult with the local Board of Health who will provide guidance on additional action for the campus to take. If the IHE has multiple campus locations, decisions should be made on a campus-by-campus basis. Additional guidance is available on the [CDC website](#).

Scenario 5: A student, staff or faculty member has recently returned from international travel.

- All returning travelers from high risk [Level 3 countries](#) must self-quarantine for 14 days. If an individual has returned from traveling to a Level 3 country, did not self-quarantine for 14 days upon return, **IS NOT currently residing in a residence hall**, AND has come to campus, IHE's should follow procedures described in Scenario 2.

- If an individual has returned from traveling to a Level 3 country, did not self-quarantine for 14 days upon return, **IS currently residing in a residence hall**, AND has come to campus, the individual may need temporary housing so that they can self-quarantine and monitor for symptoms. Consult with the local Board of Health to determine when, how, and where to move residents who must quarantine for 14 days.

Scenario 6: There *is sustained community transmission* in my local community.

- Please note that things are rapidly changing, and guidance is subject to change as the situation evolves.
- If sustained community transmission develops in a community where an IHE is located, IHE leadership should work with the local Board of Health to discuss the risk of transmission of COVID-19 at the IHE and determine appropriate actions for the campus to take.

The Department of Public Health continues to post updated information online at www.mass.gov/covid19 and the Department of Higher Education continues to do so at <https://www.mass.edu/covid-19/home.asp>. IHEs may also refer to the CDC's Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of higher education at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-ihe-response.html>.