

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Colleges and Universities

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is asking for your assistance to prepare for and help prevent the spread of the novel (new) coronavirus in Los Angeles County. Globally, there continues to be a growing number of people infected with this virus which causes “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated COVID-19) in mainland China and elsewhere. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization, current global trends indicate that the virus may spread worldwide causing a pandemic. We need to prepare to prevent the spread of this infection locally.

While the immediate health risk of COVID-19 to the general public in Los Angeles is still considered low, Public Health is proactively taking steps to prevent the spread of this infection. We strongly recommend that all organizations review and update their emergency plans and consider ways to continue essential services if on-site operations must be reduced temporarily.

Last month, we shared with you our Novel Coronavirus Guidance for Colleges and Universities which included a variety of personal and organizational preventive measures to reduce the spread of novel coronavirus. If there is significant local community transmission of COVID-19, in addition to continuing to emphasize those measures, Public Health may need to implement more disruptive actions such as canceling campus events, classes or temporarily closing dormitories to help to slow the spread of infection. We ask that university and college leadership begin to prepare in case such actions are required. This letter summarizes our current recommendations to help prevent the spread of novel coronavirus. In addition, we encourage you to visit the DPH Novel Coronavirus webpage for resources including Guidance for Business and Employers, Frequently Asked Questions and infographics: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>.

### General Information

#### **What preventive measures should be taken at an organizational level to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses, like the virus that causes COVID-19?**

- Work with student health to keep up-to-date on COVID-19 guidance for assessing sick individuals and to assure adequate infection control.
- Educate and emphasize the importance of the everyday personal prevention actions (see below).
- Encourage and support faculty, staff, and students to stay home when they are sick. Remind them to stay home and not return to work or classes until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Identify a room or rooms in dorms to isolate and quarantine sick or exposed individuals. Ideally, each individual needs a single room and bathroom.
- Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including easy access to clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Minimize, where possible, close contact and the sharing of objects such as cups, food, and drink.

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- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, bannisters, countertops, faucet handles, TV remotes, keyboards, and phones. Use the usual cleaning agents and follow the label directions.
- Provide your campus community with accurate information about novel coronavirus and steps they can take to protect themselves and their families.

### *Everyday personal prevention actions include:*

- Stay home when you are sick. Stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or symptoms of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then dispose of the tissue and clean your hands immediately. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Limit close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipes.

### **What actions should our college/university be prepared to take if there is increased community transmission of COVID-19?**

Increased community transmission of COVID-19 would indicate growing risk to the general public and that additional precautions may need to be taken to contain any local community transmission. Organizations should have a plan and be prepared to take these additional actions, if recommended by Public Health:

- Have a plan to communicate with your faculty, staff, students, and their families. Visit our website, [publichealth.lacounty.gov](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov), for accurate and updated information that can be used for your communications.
- Allow employees to stay home if someone in their house is sick or school closures have occurred.
- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees or students who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities will be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Temporarily suspend classes, close dormitories or large gathering places (libraries, student lounges) or close campus(es).
- Identify areas in dorms for cohorting large numbers of sick or exposed individuals. Ideally, each individual needs a single room and bathroom. Campuses or dormitories may need to close if a significant number of students or staff have been in close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus; such individuals (close contacts) may be required to quarantine for up to 14 days from last exposure. Campuses may also need to close if there are high rates of absenteeism among staff, faculty, and students that make it difficult for safe and effective operations. A call for large scale closure would happen only if there was significant community transmission that could not be well-controlled through other strategies.

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- Modify, postpone, or cancel large campus events. Events where people are in close contact with others for an extended period may need to be cancelled or modified should there be significant community transmission in a particular community or many different communities. We will work with college and university administration to assess risk and determine effective mitigation strategies. Should we experience a rapid increase in the number of cases across the County, we may call for cancellation of many different types of public events.
- Implement ways to ensure continuity of educational services if on-site operations are reduced temporarily such as e-learning plans, including digital and distance learning options as feasible and appropriate.

In addition, consider reviewing the CDC's Flu Prevention at Colleges and Universities website that provides campus pandemic influenza prevention tips which are applicable for your novel coronavirus preparedness: <https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/school/students-institutions-higher-education.html>

### Know where to get reliable information

Beware of scams, false news and hoaxes surrounding novel coronavirus. Accurate information, including announcements of new cases in LA County, will always be distributed by Public Health through press releases, social media, and our website. The website has more information on COVID-19 including FAQs, infographics and a guide to coping with stress, as well as tips on handwashing

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH, County)
  - <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
  - Social media: @lapublichealth
- The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline (800) 854-7771.

Other reliable sources of information about novel coronavirus are:

- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
  - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National)
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- World Health Organization (WHO, International)
  - <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

If you have questions and would like to speak to someone call the Los Angeles County Information line 2-1-1 which is available 24 hours a day