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

Recent Updates: (Changes highlighted in yellow)
3/22/2022
- Added the option for IHEs to implement group tracing for asymptomatic students with an exposure in a shared indoor airspace in a non-residential setting on an IHE campus.
- Updated masking guidance for students with COVID-19 and students with an exposure to COVID-19. These students are strongly recommended to wear a highly protective mask around others for 10 days.
- Added a hyperlink to Los Angeles County’s Return to Work guidance for staff with COVID-19 or an exposure to COVID-19.
- Removed the requirement to report close contacts to DPH. However, the requirement to notify close contacts of a known exposure with an infected person at the facility continues to apply.
- Added a requirement to include on campus residence details when reporting cases who live on campus to Public Health.
- Added a requirement to provide details on exposure location and/or group membership, where known, when reporting a cluster of 3 or more IHE cases to Public Health.
- Updated the outbreak definition for IHE residential settings to include cases that are epidemiologically linked.
- Clarified that the quarantine plans for students described in Appendix B does not apply to groups of students with a potential exposure to an infected person in a shared indoor airspace in a non-residential setting on campus.

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.
Revised Protocol for COVID-19

ORDER OF THE HEALTH OFFICER
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

- Required: A plan for all students and employees who have (1) symptoms consistent with COVID-19, (2) are quarantined because of exposure to case(s) on campus, or (3) are at an IHE with an active public health investigation to have access to diagnostic testing or be tested for COVID-19.

- Required: A plan to report all known COVID-19 hospitalizations and/or deaths among students or staff to DPH by sending a notification to ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov.

- Recommended: During periods of increased community transmission, it is recommended that an IHE implement an asymptomatic screening testing program. These programs should prioritize employees and students that are not fully vaccinated for regular testing. Fully vaccinated individuals may be considered for asymptomatic screening testing programs if there is sufficient testing capacity. Individuals who were infected with COVID-19 in the past 90 days are exempt from testing as results may remain persistently positive and not be indicative of a new active infection.

- Recommended: Students and staff are encouraged to perform daily health screenings for infectious diseases, including COVID-19, and to stay home or seek medical care for any symptoms identified.

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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. Refer to sample isolation notification letter (posted on ph.lacounty.gov/EducationToolkitIHE) for a model that can be adapted (see Template #1).

   - Students and employees with COVID-19 can end isolation after Day* 5 ONLY if all of the following criteria are met: 1. A COVID-19 viral test** collected on Day 5 or later is negative, and 2. No fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine, and 3. Other symptoms are improving --or-- Isolation can end after Day 10 if both these criteria are met: 1. No fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine, and 2. Other symptoms are not present or are improving. *For symptomatic students and staff, Day 0 is the first day of symptoms; Day 1 is the first full day after symptoms develop. For asymptomatic students and staff, Day 0 is the day the first positive test was collected; Day 1 is the first full day after the positive test was collected. **The test must be an FDA authorized viral test (e.g., PCR or Antigen test, including at-home tests). An antigen test is preferred for testing out of isolation.

   - Regardless of when isolation ends, students with COVID-19 are strongly recommended to wear a highly protective mask around others for 10 days after their positive test, except when eating or drinking. Staff with COVID-19 are required to wear a highly protective mask in the workplace around others, except when eating or drinking, for 10 days after symptom onset or the positive test (whichever is earlier). See ph.lacounty.gov/masks for more information.

   - Per Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS) there are requirements for returning to work after a positive COVID-19 test. Refer to Los Angeles County’s Return to Work guidance for more information (See Table 1). Testing that is required for employees must be provided by the employer free of charge and during work hours; these tests may not be self-administered or self-read unless they are observed by the employer or an authorized telehealth proctor. Staff may also request masks and respirators from their employer at no cost to staff. See Wear a Mask and Know your Rights for more information.

- Required: IHE Compliance Task Force must notify DPH of students and staff with confirmed COVID-19 who were on campus at any point within the 14 days prior to the illness onset date. The illness onset date is the first date of COVID-19 symptoms or the COVID-19 test date, whichever is earlier.

   - A case is considered to be infectious from 2 days before their symptoms first appeared until they are no longer required to be isolated as described in the Home Isolation Instructions for COVID-19.
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(posted on "[http://ph.laconounty.gov/covidisolation](http://ph.laconounty.gov/covidisolation)"). A person with a positive COVID-19 test but no symptoms is considered infectious from 2 days before their test was taken until their isolation period ends.

- An **individual** is considered to have been exposed (close contact) to a case during the infectious period if at least one of the following criteria are met: (1) being within 6 feet of the infected person for 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period or (2) 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). A **group** is considered to have been potentially exposed to a case during the infectious period if they shared the same indoor airspace with the infected person for 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period in a non-residential setting on an IHE campus. Additional information on individual contact tracing and group tracing are provided below.

- Secure online reporting is the preferred method for notifying DPH of COVID-19 **cases** and can be done on a computer or mobile device with access to the secure web application: [http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport](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.laconounty.gov. All case notifications should be submitted within 1 business day of being notified of the case.
  - **NOTE:** When reporting cases who live on campus, campus residence details (e.g., dormitory name/number) must be included in the case report to DPH.

- **Required:** IHE Compliance Task Force works to notify all individuals with a known exposure (identified through individual contact tracing) or groups with a potential exposure (identified through group tracing) to a COVID-19 positive case during their infectious period at the IHE.

- **Group tracing** is an approach that identifies groups that were in the same indoor airspace (e.g., classroom, offices) with an infected person during their infectious period. Once groups are identified, they are notified of their potential exposure and instructed with the actions to take. This notification can be done by an email blast or robocall. Refer to sample notification letter - Template #3 (posted on [http://http://ph.laconounty.gov/EducationToolkitIHE](http://http://ph.laconounty.gov/EducationToolkitIHE)) for a group tracing notification letter that can be adapted. Key notification messages include:
  - Students in the group may remain on the IHE campus and participate in all IHE activities during the quarantine period if they are asymptomatic.
  - Students in the group are **strongly recommended** to test once in the 10 days after the last exposure date, preferably between days 3 and 5, unless they had a positive COVID-19 test in the past 90 days; these students are exempt from testing.
  - Students in the group, regardless of vaccination status or previous infection, are **strongly recommended** to remain fully masked indoors and outdoors, unless actively eating or drinking, when around others through day 10 after their last exposure date.

- **Individual contact tracing** is the process that identifies individuals who have had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 during their infectious period on an IHE campus. Once these individuals are identified, they are notified of their exposure and instructed with actions to take. Notification can be individualized or through an email blast or robocall. Refer to sample notification letter - Template #2 (posted on [http://ph.laconounty.gov/EducationToolkitIHE](http://ph.laconounty.gov/EducationToolkitIHE)) for an individual contact tracing notification letter that can be adapted. See sections on 'Action required for close contacts who are required to quarantine' and 'Action required for close contacts who are not required to quarantine' for key notification messages to include:

  **Action for close contacts who are required to quarantine**

  The following close contacts are required to quarantine:
  - Students and staff** who are **not up to date** on all COVID-19 vaccines (i.e., not fully
**vaccinated OR fully vaccinated and not boosted, if eligible.**

- Asymptomatic fully vaccinated staff who are not boosted (if eligible) are required to quarantine but may remain on site if exposed, although they are **required** to test once 3-5 days after last exposure and **must** quarantine when not at the workplace. They may be released from the requirement to quarantine outside of the workplace after Day 5 from the date of last exposure if the test is negative. This guidance is outlined in Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention **Emergency Temporary Standards** (ETS).

- **NOTE:** Asymptomatic students and staff who were previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 within the last 90 days are not required to quarantine and are exempt from testing, regardless of vaccination status.

  - Close contacts who are required to quarantine must self-quarantine (stay in their home or another residence, separate from others) and monitor for symptoms as outlined in Quarantine and Other Instructions for Close Contacts. As long as symptoms of COVID-19 are not present they may end quarantine either:

    - After 10 full days have passed from their last known contact to the infectious case (as defined above). Activities may resume starting on Day 11 provided they are asymptomatic; OR

    - After 5 full days have passed from their last known contact to the infectious case if they have a negative viral test result from a specimen collected on Day 5 from the date of last exposure to the case. Activities may resume starting on Day 6. The test must be an FDA-authorized viral COVID-19 test (e.g., NAAT or Antigen test, including over the counter or at-home tests). If the test is positive, follow Home Isolation Instructions for COVID-19 (ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation).

**Action for close contacts who are not required to quarantine**

The following close contacts are not required to quarantine provided they remain asymptomatic:

  - **Students and staff** who are **up to date** on all COVID-19 vaccines (i.e., **fully vaccinated** and boosted, if eligible OR fully vaccinated but not yet booster-eligible).

    - Asymptomatic fully vaccinated staff who are boosted may remain onsite if exposed, however, it is **recommended** that they test*** once 3-5 days after exposure.

    - Regardless of when quarantine ends, **student close contacts are strongly recommended** to wear a highly protective mask around others, except when eating or drinking, for 10 days after the last date of exposure. Staff close contacts are **required** to wear a highly protective mask in the workplace around others, except when eating or drinking, for 10 days after the last exposure. See ph.lacounty.gov/masks for more information.

    - **NOTE:** Asymptomatic students and staff who were previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 within the last 90 days are not required to quarantine and are exempt from testing, regardless of vaccination status.

**Required:** Per Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention **Emergency Temporary Standards** (ETS) there are requirements for returning to work after an exposure to COVID-19. Refer to Los Angeles County's Return to Work guidance for more information (See Table 2 for exposed staff who are not up to date on all COVID-19 vaccines and Table 3 for exposed staff who are up to date on COVID-19 vaccines). Testing that is required for employees must be provided by the employer free of charge and during work hours; these tests may not be self-administered or self-read unless they are observed by the employer or an authorized telehealth proctor. Staff may also request masks and respirators from their employer at no cost to staff. See Wear a Mask and Know your Rights for more information.
- **Required**: IHEs are required to have a plan to facilitate COVID-19 response testing for persons who have an exposure at the IHE. Staff and students who are tested must inform the IHE of the test results. Testing resources include: Employee Health Services or Occupational Health Services, Student Health Center, Personal Healthcare Providers, Community Testing Sites: [covid19.lacounty.gov/testing](http://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.

- **Required**: IHE will assist with identifying housing for students and faculty to safely isolate or quarantine when needed.

- **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. Refer to sample general exposure notification letter (posted on [ph.lacounty.gov/EducationToolkitIHE](http://ph.lacounty.gov/EducationToolkitIHE)) for a model that can be adapted (see Template #4).

### 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 consults with DPH to determine 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 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) with possible connections with each other within a 14-day period (e.g., sharing a defined physical space together like a classroom, workspace, communal area, sports activity, IHE-sponsored gathering), the IHE should proceed with the following steps:

  - **The cluster must be reported** 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](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](http://ph.lacounty.gov/EducationToolkitIHE) and sending it to [ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov).

  - **When reporting clusters, IHEs are required** to include exposure location and/or group membership details, where known, to describe potential connections between the cases (e.g., dormitory name/location, classroom name/location athletic team name, gathering name/date, etc.), and where possible, which cases are close contacts of each other.
• 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.

• Outbreak Criteria:
  o **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).
  
  o **IHE Residential Setting**: At least 3 laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 within a 14-day period in epidemiologically linked residents and/or staff 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). Epidemiologically linked cases are those that were present at some point in the same setting at the same time while one or more cases were infectious; OR a member of a risk group as defined by public health during an outbreak. This may include persons who share a defined physical space in the dwelling indicating a higher likelihood of linked spread of disease than sporadic transmission from the community.
  
  o If outbreak criteria are met and DPH recommends an outbreak response, DPH will notify the IHE that an outbreak investigation is activated, and a public health investigator will communicate directly with the IHE to coordinate the response.
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

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<tr>
<th>1 Case</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) <em>Required:</em> IHE instructs the case to follow Home Isolation Instructions.</td>
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<td>2) <em>Required:</em> IHE works with the case to identify IHE contacts with exposure.</td>
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<td>3) <em>Required:</em> IHE notifies identified contacts of exposure.</td>
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<td>4) <em>Required:</em> IHE submits a report to DPH within 1 business day with information on the confirmed case.</td>
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<td>5) <em>Recommended:</em> IHE sends general notification to inform the relevant campus community of the exposure and precautions being taken to prevent spread.</td>
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<th>2 Cases</th>
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<td>1) <em>Required:</em> Follow steps for 1 confirmed case.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) <em>Recommended:</em> 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.</td>
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<th>3+ Cases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) <em>Required:</em> If a cluster of 3 or more cases with possible connections with each other occurred within a 14-day period, IHE reports this immediately to DPH and includes details regarding exposure location/group membership of the cases.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) <em>Required:</em> DPH determines if outbreak criteria have been met. If outbreak criteria are met and DPH recommends an outbreak response, a public health investigator will contact the IHE to coordinate the outbreak investigation.</td>
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Appendix B: COVID-19 Guidance for Isolation and Quarantine Plans for Students At Institutes of Higher Education

Guidance for isolation plans for students with COVID-19:

- If student is from local community: IHE should determine if the student is able to isolate in their family homes in accordance with Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance (ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation).
- If student lives off-campus: IHE should determine if the living conditions are adequate to support isolation without putting other students at risk in accordance with Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance.
- If student lives on campus in a single room: IHE should determine if the living conditions are adequate to support isolation without putting other students at risk in accordance with Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance.
  
  Students in isolation should be restricted to their room in the isolation area. These students cannot attend class, visit other areas of the campus (e.g., fitness center, cafeteria, library, or laundry room), go to the grocery store or pharmacy, or attend any other events or gatherings.
  
  Students in isolation should not share bathrooms or common spaces with students not in isolation.

- If the off- or on-campus living quarters are not appropriate for isolation: IHE should consider developing a dedicated isolation area, such as dedicating floors, halls, or other separate living spaces for the isolation of students infected with COVID-19 in accordance with Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance.
  
  Students in isolation should be housed separately from other students, preferably with their own dedicated points of entry/exit, physical barriers, and visible signage to separate those in isolation from students who do not have COVID-19.
  
  Students in isolation should be restricted to their room in the isolation area if there are students in the same area who are not in isolation.
  
  Students in isolation may be housed together and may share bathrooms and common spaces. These students cannot attend class, visit other areas of the campus (e.g., fitness center, cafeteria, library, or laundry room), go to the grocery store or pharmacy, or attend any other events or gatherings.
  
  If adequate space cannot be dedicated on campus, local hotels and motels may be able to provide sufficient short-term housing. The same isolation scheme would apply for a student in a single room on a floor with other students not on isolation.

- Efforts should be made to ensure compliance with COVID-19 isolation as per Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance, either with direct monitoring or indirect monitoring (i.e. ID card monitoring, contact tracing apps on phones, etc.).
- Outside visitation is not permitted to students in isolation. If the student in isolation requires essential services, staff must wear personal protective equipment, limit their exposure to students, wash hands upon leaving the area, and monitor for signs and symptoms of illness.
- Students in isolation should be provided with any necessary supplies and services (e.g., food, cleaning supplies, laundry, thermometer, medications, information on who to contact if they become ill).
- If the student in isolation requires medical care, the healthcare provider, emergency medical services, and anyone else assisting with the transportation of student should be notified of the student’s COVID-19 infection so they can take proper precautions.
- If the student in isolation must leave the living quarters, they should wear a highly protective mask, physically distance themselves from others, and go directly to/from their destination.
- Students in isolation should be given online educational access to missed classes when possible.
- Routine health checks for students in isolation should be done virtually when possible.
Guidance for quarantine plans for students required to quarantine:

*Does not apply to student groups identified through group tracing that have a potential exposure to a person with COVID-19 in a shared indoor airspace in a non-residential setting on campus.

- If student is from local community: IHE should determine if the student is able to quarantine in their family homes in accordance with Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance (ph.lacounty.gov/covidquarantine).

- If student lives off-campus: IHE should determine if the living conditions are adequate to support quarantine without putting other students or household members at risk in accordance with Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance.

- If a student lives on campus in a single room: IHE should determine if the living conditions are adequate to support quarantine without putting other students at risk in accordance with Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance.

  - Students in quarantine should be restricted to their room in the quarantine area. These students cannot attend class, visit other areas of the campus (e.g., fitness center, cafeteria, library, or laundry room), go to the grocery store or pharmacy, or attend any other events or gatherings.

  - Students in quarantine should be kept away from other persons in quarantine (i.e., they should not share a room nor be in common rooms together). Ideally, they should use a separate bathroom. If this is not possible, they should wear a highly protective mask when in the common bathroom, avoid being in the bathroom at the same time as others if possible, and should disinfect the bathroom themselves after each use.

- If the off- or on-campus living quarters are not appropriate for quarantine: IHE should consider developing a dedicated quarantine area. All quarantined students should follow Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance.

  - Students in quarantine should be housed separately from other students preferably with their own dedicated points of entry/exit, physical barriers, and visible signage to separate quarantined students from others in the living quarters.

  - Students in quarantine should be restricted to their room in the quarantine area. These students cannot attend class, visit other areas of the campus (e.g., fitness center, cafeteria, library, or laundry room), go to the grocery store or pharmacy, or attend any other events or gatherings.

  - Students in quarantine should be kept away from other persons in quarantine (i.e., they should not share a room nor be in common rooms together). Ideally, they should use a separate bathroom. If this is not possible, they should wear a highly protective mask when leaving their room and when in the shared bathroom. They should avoid being in the shared bathroom at the same time as others if possible and should disinfect the bathroom themselves after each use.

  - If adequate space cannot be dedicated on campus, local hotels and motels may be able to provide sufficient short-term housing. The same quarantine scheme would apply for a student in a single room on a floor with other students not in quarantine.

- Efforts should be made to ensure compliance with COVID-19 quarantine as per Public Health’s Home Quarantine Guidance, either with direct monitoring or indirect monitoring (i.e. ID card monitoring, contact tracing apps on phones, etc.).

- Outside visitation is not permitted to students in quarantine. If the student in quarantine requires essential services, staff must wear personal protective equipment, limit their exposure to students, wash hands upon leaving the area and monitor for signs and symptoms of illness.

- Students in quarantine should be provided with any necessary supplies and services (e.g., food, cleaning supplies, laundry, thermometer, medications, information on who to contact if they become ill).

- If the student in quarantine requires medical care, the healthcare provider, emergency medical services, and anyone else assisting with the transportation of student should be notified of the student’s exposure so
they can take proper precautions.

- If the student in quarantine must leave the living quarters, they should wear a highly protective mask, physically distance themselves from others, and go directly to/from their destination.
- Students in quarantine should be given online educational access to missed classes when possible.
- Routine health checks for individuals in quarantine should be done virtually when possible.
- If a student in quarantine develops symptoms at any point within 10 full days after their last exposure, they must test immediately. If the test is positive, they must follow instructions in Public Health’s Home Isolation Guidance.