

# COVID-19 Prevention and Mitigation Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)

In higher education settings, students, staff, faculty, and other members of a campus community are at risk for COVID-19 infections. COVID-19 outbreaks on campus and in residential housing may impact the learning, engagement, and well-being for all members of a campus community throughout the academic year. All institutions of higher education (IHEs) should prepare and implement a COVID-19 response plan.

IHEs should maintain awareness of local health authority (often the [local health jurisdiction](#)) COVID-19 guidance and consult their local health authority for questions about preventing or responding to COVID-19 outbreaks, providing vaccination, offering testing, or other issues. Local health officers may require more stringent guidance to control the spread of infectious disease, including COVID-19 ([RCW 70.05.070](#)).

Follow all [Department of Labor and Industries \(L&I\) requirements](#) for workplaces as outlined.

## Reporting Requirements

**Institutions of higher education, and the general public, must cooperate with public health authorities** in the investigation of cases and outbreaks that may be associated with their institution ([WAC 246-101](#)).

Workplaces should notify their [local health jurisdiction](#) of any COVID-19 outbreaks, and review [DOH's guidance for non-health care businesses and organizations during COVID-19](#).

**L&I must be notified of outbreaks involving 10 or more workers** ([WAC 296-62-600](#)). The report can be made by calling 1-800-423-7233 and using option 1.

## Isolation and Exposure Notification

**Any student or employee, regardless of vaccination status, who reports or exhibits [COVID-19-like symptoms](#) should not come to work or school, and should get tested for COVID-19.** If a student or employee tests positive for COVID-19, they should [isolate](#) and follow guidance in DOH's [What to do if you test positive for COVID-19](#).

IHEs should have a process in place to inform all students and employees when there are cases or outbreaks on campus. **Employers are required to notify employees of COVID-19 exposure** following the requirements in [WAC 296-62-600](#). See also the L&I guidance document [Questions and Answers: Reporting and Notification Requirements of HELSA and PPE Usage](#). Refer students and employees to DOH's [What to do if you were potentially exposed to COVID-19](#) guidance and the [COVID-19 Symptom Decision Trees](#) for general information.

IHEs with student residential facilities should provide isolation and quarantine support for students.

## Vaccinations

DOH and the CDC recommend everyone stay [up to date](#) on their COVID-19 vaccines.

Students or employees may have received a COVID-19 vaccine that is not currently authorized by the FDA for use in the United States. Institutions should reference the CDC for more information on [different COVID-19 vaccines](#) and [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States](#). Students can work with their health care provider or on-campus student health services to consider their individual vaccination status and options.

As of November 1, 2022, there is no state-wide mandate for higher education employees to be fully vaccinated. However, an employer can choose to require COVID-19 vaccination for their employees.

## General Guidance on Prevention and Response Strategies for COVID-19

All prevention strategies, including vaccination, masking, and improved ventilation, provide some level of protection against COVID-19. Layered strategies implemented at the same time provide the greatest level of protection, and should be considered when [community levels of COVID-19](#) are high. All campuses should follow the guidance below.

Topic	Guidance Document
COVID-19 guidance for businesses, organizations, and other non-health care workplaces	<a href="#">Guidance for Non-Healthcare Businesses and Organizations during COVID-19   Washington State Department of Health</a>
Mask recommendations and requirements for preventing and responding to COVID-19	<a href="#">Mask/Face Covering Guidance During COVID-19   Washington State Department of Health</a>
Guidance for what to do if someone tests positive for COVID-19	<a href="#">What to do if you test positive for COVID-19   Washington State Department of Health</a>
Guidance for what to do if someone is exposed to COVID-19	<a href="#">What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19   Washington State Department of Health</a>
Information on WA Notify – the free and confidential exposure notification tool	<a href="#">Washington Exposure Notifications - WA Notify   Washington State Department of Health</a>
Ventilation guidance including how to increase effective air filtration and the intake of outdoor air	<a href="#">Ventilation and Air Quality for Reducing Transmission of Airborne Illnesses   Washington State Department of Health</a>
Guidance on providing cooling for building occupants when air conditioning and HVAC systems are not available	<a href="#">Cooling Indoor Spaces Without Air Conditioning   Washington State Department of Health</a>
Guidance on cleaning and disinfecting to prevent COVID-19 infection	<a href="#">Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Public Spaces   Washington State Department of Health</a>

## Additional Resources

Below are additional resources that IHEs may find useful.

Topic	Link
CDC guidance on different types of masks and respirators, including choosing a mask or respirator for different situations	<a href="#">Masks and Respirators   CDC</a>
American College Health Association guidance	<a href="#">Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education in the COVID-19 Era   ACHA</a>
DOH vaccination resources	<a href="#">COVID-19 Vaccine   Washington State Department of Health</a>
WA toolkit for employers interested in helping their staff and others get vaccinated against COVID-19	<a href="#">COVID-19 Vaccines Toolkit for Businesses and Employers   Washington State Coronavirus Response (COVID-19)</a>
DOH testing resources	<a href="#">Resources and Recommendations   Washington State Department of Health</a>
DOH self-testing guidance for establishments, including use of self-tests with and without a medical test site license	<a href="#">Interim SARS-CoV-2 Self-Testing Guidance for Employers   Washington State Department of Health</a>
DOH information on reporting point of care test results	<a href="#">Reporting COVID-19 Test Results for Point-of-Care Testing Facilities   Washington State Department of Health</a>
DOH information on COVID-19 therapeutics (pre-exposure prophylaxis and treatment)	<a href="#">COVID-19 Therapeutics   Washington State Department of Health</a>
Resources and guides for supporting the emotional well-being of students and employees	<a href="#">Behavioral Health Resources and Recommendations   Washington State Department of Health</a>

## More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), [how and when people should get tested](#), and [information on vaccinations](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

**Have more questions?** Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email [civil.rights@doh.wa.gov](mailto:civil.rights@doh.wa.gov).