## COVID-19: Role of Public Health and Colleges/Universities in Preparedness and Response Efforts

### Public Health Role

**Testing**
- Assist in identifying resources for diagnostic testing for colleges and universities, including private and public testing options.
- Encourage automated reporting of lab results in a machine-readable format to public health to improve the timeliness of reporting, decrease data entry burden/errors, and improve completeness of lab data.

**PPE and Cloth face coverings**
- Make recommendations for the appropriate use of PPE and cloth face coverings.

**Identification of Cases**
- Follow-up on reports of suspected and confirmed cases.
- Interview cases to identify potential source(s) of exposure and identify all close contacts.
- Enroll cases in active monitoring with Local Health Department (LHD).
- Partner with Student Health Center to assess any potential workplace exposures and enroll exposed staff into monitoring.
- Preserve the anonymity of patients and practitioners, according to §32.1-41 of the *Code of Virginia*. In situations where divulging a patient’s name may be required to identify other potentially exposed individuals, VDH will seek permission from the patient for release of information; the release will be conducted in the most minimally compromising manner (such as to a single point of contact in the Student Health Center).

### College/University Role

**Testing**
- Ensure access to diagnostic testing for COVID-19, including adequate capacity to obtain, administer, and process those tests.
- For colleges/universities conducting their own lab testing, partner with public health to implement reporting of all minimum data fields for SARS-CoV-2 results (positive and negative) in a timely manner, in a machine-readable format, with a goal of automated electronic laboratory reporting (ELR).

**PPE and Cloth face coverings**
- Ensure adequate supply of PPE for healthcare and other relevant staff.
- Ensure that students and staff have access to cloth face coverings to help slow the spread of disease.

**Identification of Cases**
- Distribute educational messages to students about COVID-19 symptoms and steps to take if they become ill.
- Ensure that Student Health Centers can safely evaluate ill students. Partner with LHD to assess any potential exposures and enroll exposed staff into monitoring.
- Report suspected and confirmed cases to LHD. Assist public health in follow-up of cases, such as in identifying students sharing a classroom or dorm.
- Protect the confidentiality of students and staff who are part of Case and Contact Investigations.
- Implement recommendations for cleaning/disinfection, including areas where cases have been (rooms, dorms, classrooms, buildings, etc.).
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Public Health Role</th>
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<td><strong>Isolation of Cases</strong></td>
<td>● Ensure that cases are isolated appropriately and released from isolation, based on the VDH symptom- or test-based strategy</td>
<td>● For students who live on-campus, ensure appropriate housing is identified for cases during their isolation period (ideally single room with private bathroom)</td>
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| **Follow-up with Contacts of Cases** | ● Communicate with all contacts identified by the cases. Place contacts in quarantine and enroll in public health monitoring in the Sara Alert system. Refer contacts for testing as recommended.  
● Release from quarantine as indicated, or coordinate for medical care/evaluation if symptoms develop. | ● Assist with outreach to students identified as contacts, as requested by LHD  
● Ensure appropriate housing is identified for contacts during their quarantine period (ideally single room with private bathroom)  
● Assist with coordination of medical evaluation for students who live on-campus. |
| **Essential Needs of Students and Staff** | ● Work with local government, community organizations, and the college/university to ensure that essential needs are met for students and staff in isolation or quarantine who do not live on campus | ● For students who live on-campus, ensure that essential needs are met, including those in isolation or quarantine. Ensure ability to deliver meals to those on campus in isolation or quarantine. |
| **Social Distancing**          | ● Make social distancing recommendations for colleges and universities.  
● Use case, contact and outbreak data to inform recommendations for social distancing and closure. | ● Develop plans to increase social distancing in classrooms, dormitories, dining halls, common areas, etc.  
● Develop contingency plans to halt classes and shut down campus operations if disease spread reaches critical values. Communicate to parents and students about plans. |
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**VDH/OEPI**

**To protect the health and promote the well-being of all people in Virginia.**

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| Communications/Other   | - Provide health education messages and messages to reduce the spread of disease.  
- Coordinate outbreak investigations; provide specific disease prevention and control recommendations to reduce spread of disease.  
- Communicate summary information on the number of cases and contacts in the jurisdiction, district, and/or region to provide situational awareness for colleges/universities. Ensure that anonymity of individuals is preserved and that colleges/universities have data necessary for adequate planning and preparations. | - Ensure that students have access to distance learning options so that they can keep up with work; ensure students and employees have absences excused and have access to mental health services.  
- Widely communicate prevention and control messages, including information about outbreaks, disease prevention and control recommendations, steps to take if illness develops, etc  
- Promote flu vaccination when available and COVID-19 vaccination (if it becomes available) |