



A STUDENT-CENTERED VISION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

**Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE)**  
**Updated COVID-19 Recommendations and Best Practices for**  
**New Jersey Institutions of Higher Education**

Last Updated: June 25, 2021

Due to the continued improvement of New Jersey's public health metrics and the significant progress New Jersey had made in its vaccination efforts, [on June 4, 2021](#), Governor Phil Murphy signed [P.L.2021, c.103](#) and issued Executive Order [244](#), ending the public health emergency. Under the legislation, certain executive orders issued pursuant to the public health emergency will expire on July 4, 2021, including Executive Orders [155](#) and [175](#), which address public health mandates for the higher education sector. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) is offering this updated document, which includes recommendations and best practices for institutions to consider, in conjunction with [guidance for institutions of higher education](#) issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to inform ongoing institutional operations.

Institutional plans must continue balancing the public health and safety of campus communities, including students, faculty, and staff, with being responsive to changes in public health guidance or mandates. All approaches should prioritize equity in planning and educational delivery in order to build a stronger, fairer, and healthier New Jersey as we create long-term resiliency. The following is not an exhaustive list of all considerations, as some elements may be unique to certain institutions and not applicable to others, such as different vaccination requirements. Institutions must continue following all relevant federal, state, and local guidance.

**SCREENING, CONTACT TRACING, TESTING, AND VACCINATION PROTOCOLS**

***Screening/Contact Tracing***

Key precautionary measures to prevent COVID-19 spread continue to be appropriate screening, testing, and contact tracing for the institutional community. In developing screening/contact tracing protocols, institutions should take into account the proportion of their campus community that is fully vaccinated. Though contact tracing efforts remain the primary responsibility of the local health department, institutions must work with the local health authority within their jurisdiction to establish protocols aligned with existing state and federal health privacy statutes and regulations. Institutions can locate their local health department through the [New Jersey Department of Health \(DOH\) directory](#). Institutions should continue monitoring the level of COVID-19 activity among students, staff, and faculty and continue reporting promptly to public health officials. Institutions can use the [CALI and Variant Surveillance Reports](#) to view data on COVID-19 community transmission risk by six regions within the state.

***Additional Resources***

- CDC: [Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in K-12 Schools and IHEs](#)

### ***Testing***

As testing and testing reliability evolves, institutions should update their protocols, including those for vaccinated individuals. Per CDC guidelines, fully-vaccinated individuals do not need to undergo regular testing, unless they experience symptoms. For individuals who are not vaccinated, institutions should continue conducting diagnostic testing or screening of community members.

### ***Additional Resources***

- CDC: [Testing in Institutions of Higher Education](#) and [Guidance for Shared or Congregate Housing](#)

### ***Vaccination***

Vaccination is a matter of personal responsibility, and the state encourages as many individuals who can get vaccinated to do so to protect the public health of the community at-large. Institutions of higher education play a key role in promoting vaccination uptake, addressing vaccination hesitancy, and promoting healthy behaviors among college communities through regular outreach and communication, as well as connecting campus community members to vaccine events and clinics.

Currently, individuals aged 12 or older who live, work or study in New Jersey are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccines, which are available to all New Jerseyans regardless of immigration or insurance status. Institutions should allow employees to utilize sick leave for time off related to COVID-19 vaccination appointments and side effects. Institutions are also encouraged to promote vaccination among their workforce and students, and partner with vaccination providers to host clinics on campus.

### ***Additional Resources***

- DOH: [Vaccine Appointment Finder](#) and [Vaccination Website](#)
- CDC: [“Choosing Safer Activities for Vaccinated and Unvaccinated People” Graphic](#) and [Post Vaccine Considerations for Workplaces](#)
- White House COVID-19 College Vaccine Challenge: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/covidcollegechallenge/>

## **GENERAL SAFEGUARDING**

Academic and social activities may continue in accordance with both statewide and [CDC/DOH](#) public health infection control standards, such as handwashing and cleaning and disinfection. Even on campuses where vaccination is required, institutions should continue promoting and practicing general safeguarding measure for any campus community members who may not be able to receive a vaccination. A key strategy in reducing COVID-19 spread is communicating expectations, policies, processes, and best practices to stakeholders.

Per CDC guidance, institutions where the campus population may not be fully vaccinated (defined as two weeks after receiving the second shot of a two-dose vaccination or two weeks after receiving a single-dose vaccination) are strongly encouraged to continue masking and social distancing. Institutions should develop policies that strongly encourage masking and social distancing for unvaccinated individuals.

Institutions should continue to communicate that individuals presenting with symptoms or a positive diagnosis of COVID-19 must not attend in-person instruction and should be provided an alternative option for their work, such as remote instruction.

For residential campuses, institutions should set aside a reasonable percentage of designated single rooms with private bathrooms for isolating residents who display symptoms or have a positive diagnosis of COVID-19. Institutions should develop policies for residents who may be exposed and need to quarantine away from others. For additional considerations for housing and communal spaces, institutions should refer to the [CDC's Guidance for Shared Congregate Housing](#).

Institutions may choose to adopt stricter COVID-19 requirements, such as mandating mask wearing or social distancing, that are consistent with federal and state law.

#### *Additional Resources*

- CDC:
  - [Social Distancing Guidance](#)
  - [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)
  - [Interim Public Health Recommendations for Full Vaccinated People](#)
  - [Ventilation in Buildings](#)
- DOH:
  - [COVID-19 Interim Guidance for Local Health Departments for Restarting Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\)](#)
  - [General Information on COVID-19 \(including infographic\)](#)

## **MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES**

The COVID-19 pandemic may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. Institutions are encouraged to raise awareness among employees and students about COVID-related stressors and promote resources such as mental health screenings ([also available online](#)), and the NJ MentalHealthCares helpline that helps people dealing with anxiety and worry related to the pandemic and makes referrals for additional support. New Jerseyans can call 1-866-202-HELP (4357) for free, confidential support from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week.

*To view the previous 'Restart Standards for all New Jersey Institutions of Higher Education' and a fuller list of considerations, visit: <https://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/documents/pdf/index/OSHERestart.pdf>  
To view a full list of OSHE COVID-19 Resources, visit: <https://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/COVID-19.shtml>*