



Syracuse University

**Response to New York State
Department of Health**

**Interim Guidance for Higher-Education
During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency**

Date of Submission:
July 17, 2020

- A weekly webcast open to the campus community (video is subsequently posted on the web site posted above)
- Web conferences with key stakeholders (faculty, staff, graduate students, parents, and families)
- Regular emails tailored to key audiences (trustees, faculty/staff, graduate students, international students, on-campus and off-campus students, student-athletes, parents, and families)
- Media outreach to local and national outlets

Syracuse University has designated media spokespersons and regularly draws on leadership and faculty expertise to answer phone and email inquiries. Standardized and evidence-informed responses are included in the frequently asked questions document, which is disseminated to the call center, Office of Parent and Family Programs, the Division of Enrollment the Student Experience, the Office of First Year and Transfer Programs, Athletics, and Academic Affairs.

Finally, Syracuse University is committed to transparency related to the status of COVID-19 related illness across the campus community. For that reason, Syracuse University is collaborating with Onondaga County to design an accessible COVID-19 ‘dashboard’ that will aggregate de-identified data related to positive COVID-19 tests and active cases commensurate within the campus community. This dashboard will conform to best health practices related to information sharing and dissemination.

6. Shutdown of In-Person Operations (if required):

In consultation with public health experts and given an assessment of the University’s capacity and capability to act in response to instances of community spread disease within the campus community, Syracuse University has developed a decision framework informing scenarios that may require decreasing on-campus activities and operations and/or closing the campus. That framework is detailed below, along with complementary details related to how students would safely depart campus in the instance of a campus closure.

- a. **Operational Activity:** The decision framework informing scenarios that may require decreasing on-campus activities and operations and/or closing the campus is based on varying levels of infection and exposure with the campus community - and the corresponding ability of Syracuse University to contain, isolate and remediate those instances. Specifically, the University has identified a 5-level decision framework as follows:
 - **Level 1:** A small number of individuals have tested COVID-positive and contact tracing suggests that exposures are confined to 10 or fewer people. In this instance, epidemiology and contact tracing suggests that the situation can be contained, isolated and remediated.

- i. **Impact on Campus Operations:** The scenario lends itself to a focused response. Affected personnel are counseled, quarantined or isolated as appropriate. Affected areas are contained, isolated and decontaminated. University medical staff will monitor for possible escalation. All other campus operations remain unaffected.
- ii. **Impact on Residential Life:** If the scenario includes residents, they are identified, counseled and referred to quarantine or isolation as needed. If the exposure is believed to be limited to a specific room, restroom, floor or common area; that area is contained, isolated and decontaminated. All other residential life activity remains unaffected.
- **Level 2:** The number of infected or exposed people is estimated at between 10 and 100 people. Circumstances allow for effective contact tracing and epidemiology, and there is high confidence in the ability to contain, isolate and remediate the flare-up.
 - i. **Impact on Campus Operations:** This scenario may require the precise curtailment of operations in specific areas (rooms, floors, buildings). In addition to decontamination, the areas or programs remain curtailed for a period of time to prevent ongoing exposures.
 - ii. **Impact on Residential Life:** In this scenario, a larger number of residential life students may be impacted, covering a broader area (multiple floors, a whole building). A larger area is placed under quarantine or referred to isolation as needed.
- **Level 3:** A small outbreak is occurring in what appears to be a defined population (e.g. a certain School or degree program). The number of potential exposures is greater than 100 and confidence in the ability to accurately complete contact tracing is moderate. It is also the case that it may be difficult to identify a specific area for containment, isolation, and remediation.
 - i. **Impact on Campus Operations:** This scenario may require the curtailment of operations in select programs or areas, but falls short of a campus-wide response. The objective is to reduce ongoing exposures by scaling down specific programs, buildings, and areas. Select programs move back into an online-only environment with non-resident students staying off campus, resident students staying in their rooms and non-essential affected employees working from home.
 - ii. **Impact on Residential Life:** Known exposures to quarantine, potentially in bulk (e.g. entire building or more). Infections move to isolation. Others shelter-in-place (stay and study in their rooms).
- **Level 4:** A significant outbreak in excess of approximately 100 infections has occurred and there is low confidence in the ability to provide identification of all affected parties or spaces, containment and isolation campus-wide.
 - i. **Impact on Campus Operations:** Campus as a whole comes to a full “pause”. All programs move to online alternatives. Campus access is restricted. Non-resident students and non-essential employees are told to work from home and stay away from campus. This

provides time to assess the extent of the outbreak, maximize distancing to prevent new exposures and develop a remediation plan. The underlying intent is to eventually control the situation and resume normal operations (1-4 weeks).

- ii. **Impact on Residential Life:** Under a campus-wide “pause”, all residential students are instructed to shelter-in-place (confined to their rooms, restrooms, floors). Students with the opportunity to leave campus for the pause will be encouraged to do so. The underlying assumption is that they will return to their rooms at the end of the pause period.
- **Level 5:** The situation has escalated to the point where ongoing campus or community transmission is occurring at a significant rate. There is no realistic strategy to contain or control the situation. It is estimated that it will take in excess of a month to “flatten the curve.” Given the timing in the academic calendar, the University has no other option than to shut down on-campus operations completely, again.
 - i. **Impact on Campus Operations:** All campus operations come to a halt and all activities move to an online environment for the remainder of the semester. Campus access is restricted and non-essential employees work from home.
 - ii. **Impact on Residential Life:** Students will be informed that residential instruction and other in-person campus activities are indefinitely suspended, and that the campus is transitioning to a ‘closed’ operating status for the remainder of the semester.
- b. **Move-Out:** Given a Level-5 scenario, assuming permission from public health officials, a 72-hour move out/shut down process will be initiated. Students are asked to pack up and move out with their possessions. A formal check-out process (key drop) will be implemented.
 - Those with the means to travel within 8-10 hours of Syracuse will be asked to leave within 24 hours.
 - Those who need to arrange travel to other areas of the United States will be asked to leave within 48 hours.
 - Those students who are able to arrange international travel are asked to leave within 72 hours.
 - Those unable to leave will appeal to remain on campus. Syracuse University will support any student who, for financial or other hardship reasons, cannot depart campus in response to a shutdown scenario.
 - If the scenario is more extreme, students may be asked to evacuate campus immediately with only those items they can carry with them. All other possessions are left behind. A virtual check out process will be utilized.
- c. **Communication:** In preparation for the fall semester, Syracuse University has developed a multi-mode strategy to communicate with both students and parents. This strategy includes email, all-student text messages via the Orange Alert system, and direct messaging over social media

platforms. In coordination with local and NYS officials, Syracuse University would message internally and externally any and all scenarios that would necessitate decreasing on-campus activities and operations, and/or closing the campus. These communications will be frequent, authentic, detailed and designed to maintain real-time, proactive and collaborative lines of communications with key campus and community stakeholders. University communications will target audiences and campus and community stakeholders that include (but are not limited to):

- On-campus students
- Off-campus students
- Parents/Families
- Student association/Graduate student organization
- International students
- Underrepresented student groups
- Faculty and Staff
- Greek life
- Athletics
- Neighborhood groups
- Elected officials
- Local media

Summary

Consistent with the requirements detailed in the *Interim Guidance for Higher-Education During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency*, issued by the New York State Department of Health (June 28th, 2020), this document summarizes the strategic policies, protocols and requirements associated with Syracuse University's plan to re-activate our residential campus for in-person instruction on August 24, 2020. Additional detail and context supporting this plan is provided in the three supplemental exhibits included with this submission. Again, Syracuse University has assumed a deliberate, thoughtful and science-based approach to our planned reactivation of a residential campus experience for students and faculty in the fall of 2020. Our efforts have prioritized COVID-19 prevention, planning, and preparedness and a commitment to ensuring the health and wellbeing of our campus and the Central New York Community. To that end, we are committed to work closely with New York State, the Onondaga County Health Department and local leaders to ensure a safe reopening of our residential campus. Further, we are committed to maintaining the policies and procedures detailed in this submission, and included in the supplemental exhibits, throughout the duration of the COVID-19 health emergency.

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Supplemental Exhibits:

1. *Syracuse University SAFE; A COVID-19 Public Health & Emergency Response Framework Supporting Reactivation of a Residential Campus*
2. *Return to Campus Guide for Faculty & Staff (Summer 2020)*
3. *Syracuse University Athletics Health & Safety Framework*