Policies and Procedures for VCOM Employees and Students under COVID-19 Restrictions

May 21, 2021

This plan has been submitted to the State Departments of Health, the State and National College Accrediting bodies and the CDC and is subject to change upon their requirements.

Updates to these documents may also occur due to changes in the spread of COVID-19 in each state, community, or on a VCOM Campus.

Faculty, staff, and students should refer to the document often and be sure they refer to the online copy at www.vcom.edu for the latest version of the plan.
# Table of Contents

SECTION 1: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR VCOM EMPLOYEES and STUDENTS UNDER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS ............................................................................................................................................... 3

SECTION 2: VCOM WORKPLACE POLICIES RELATED TO COVID-19, FOR EMPLOYEES ONLY ......................... 14

SECTION 3: EVENTS ON CAMPUS .................................................................................................................................................................................. 18

SECTION 4: VCOM FACILITIES PLAN FOR SAFE OPERATIONS OF THE CAMPUS .......................................................... 19

SECTION 5: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PLAN ................................................................................................................................. 21

SECTION 6: POLICIES FOR WHEN A STUDENT OR EMPLOYEE BECOMES ILL WHILE ON CAMPUS ............... 22

SECTION 8. COVID-19 OFFICERS, COMMITTEE MEMBERS, AND CONTACTS .............................................................. 25

SECTION 9: VCOM CAMPUS RESPONSE TO A COVID-19 SUSPICIOUS CASE, POSITIVE CASE, OR CAMPUS OUTBREAKS ........................................................................................................... 28

SECTION 10: ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS WHILE OPERATING UNDER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS ........... 29

SECTION 11: COPING STRATEGIES AND AVOIDING THE STIGMA OF COVID-19 ................................................. 30
SECTION 1: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR VCOM EMPLOYEES and STUDENTS UNDER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

The policies and procedures listed in this document are applied only during the time of COVID-19 restrictions. All policies and procedures listed in the Employee and Student Handbook still apply except when the policies and procedures in this document supersede those in the Employee and Student Handbooks. The policies and procedures that follow apply only where there are changes due to COVID-19 Restrictions from 5/18/2021 through 7/15/2021. If the employee or student has a question, he or she should check with the COVID-19 Officer (which is the Director of Human Resources or appropriate Associate Dean). In general, when there is a conflict related to COVID-19 policies, the policies in this document will supersede those in the handbook while under COVID-19 restrictions.

Last Updated: 5/18/2021

VCOM follows the CDC recommendations for opening Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) and the State Departments of Health's guidance in the states where VCOM Campuses are located, as closely as possible. When those guidelines are in conflict VCOM will follow those recommended by the CDC for higher education; except when such recommendations are in conflict with the governing laws.

The information in this section are policies and procedures for employees and students while on the VCOM campuses or VCOM property and in VCOM research laboratories. The policies also address VCOM students in clinical training and in general require the student to also follow the expected behaviors set by the clinical site to avoid exposure and transmission of the virus to patients or students.

Any student who has questions or difficulty in following VCOM policies or procedures as listed must meet with their COVID officer (the Appropriate Associate Dean) to discuss possible alternatives or to request accommodations. Any employee who has questions or difficulty following VCOM policies or procedures as listed must meet with their COVID officer (HR) to discuss any possible alternatives or to request accommodations.

GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS ON CAMPUS AND FOR EMPLOYEES UNDER COVID-19 CONDITIONS BEGINNING 5-18-2021.

History: While the country is moving from Phase 2 to Phase 3 guidelines, public health data suggests that COVID-19 continues as a threat nationwide. However great strides have been occurring nationwide and as many more persons have become vaccinated and it has become apparent that vaccination is the most important health initiative to reduce the threat and to return to normal operations. The vaccine will also reduce the deaths and serious complications related to COVID-19. The continuing evidence on the safety of the vaccine has been seen as increasing numbers of persons have been vaccinated with relative few cases of complications. While there was concern early in vaccine trials on safety, the number of persons who have received the vaccine now far exceed any trial with complications and/or adverse reactions in a
The employees and students of VCOM have followed the nationwide guidelines by the CDC for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) which has allowed VCOM to offer students medical education and has also continued the employment of faculty and staff on and off campus during this pandemic. To continue safe operations students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to follow CDC and evidence-based medicine data (rather than media reports) and to follow the policies and procedures as listed in this document.

VCOM is thankful for the diligence of most students, faculty, and staff in efforts to keep everyone safe and to everyone’s adherence to the policies that have allowed the College the opportunity to continue offer education and the employment of our faculty and staff. VCOM remains fortunate to have had only a small number of cases from the four campuses and no true “campus outbreaks” have occurred. Following the policies and procedures set forth have allowed our campuses to remain in operation to date and following these new procedures, will allow more personal freedoms while still practicing safety as recommended by the CDC. VCOM requires all employees and students to be vigilant in following the policies and procedures, that follow. Notices will be sent anytime this document is updated. If an employee or student has a question about any policy or procedure, they should contact their COVID-19 officer.

I. SCREENING FOR COVID-19

Using the MyHealthTracer.com web application as our screening tool, which depends upon employees to perform their own self-health checks and to log their exposures and illnesses, has allowed VCOM to continue to operate this past academic year. This instrument has allowed faculty and students the dignity of checking their own temperatures at home and avoided routine uncomfortable testing. All employees and students were required to enter their general screening status daily, Monday through Friday. Beginning May 21, those who are fully vaccinated will not be required to do the daily logging. The employee or student who has been fully vaccinated will only be required to enter known exposures and symptoms of illness. In addition, fully vaccinated students and faculty who have submitted evidence of vaccination to the COVID-19 officer and are 14 days out from full vaccination date will not be required to wear a mask on campus. Evidence is provided by a picture of their vaccination card demonstrating full vaccination within the last nine months.

Once fully vaccinated the employee or student may decrease their entries to when they experience any symptoms of illness and when they have a direct exposure to someone with COVID-19. A five-day self-quarantine will still follow for direct, significant unprotected exposures.

Providing Evidence to your COVID Officers: The COVID-19 OFFICER for students in the OMS 1 and OMS 2 year is the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. The COVID-19 OFFICER for students in the OMS 3 and OMS 4 year is the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs. The COVID-19 OFFICER for employees is the Director for Human Resources on each campus. Evidence of vaccination is defined as a picture of your vaccination card demonstrating full vaccination to your COVID-19 officer.
II. If an employee or student has symptoms of COVID-19, whether fully vaccinated or not, they should not come to campus, should log the symptoms on the MyHealthTracer.com application, and should notify their COVID-19 officer. The employee or student should also have a COVID-19 test if symptoms persist greater than 24 hours.

SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

An individual employee or student experiencing any of the following symptoms may not enter College facilities and should isolate immediately. Symptoms most common to COVID-19 include the following:

A. Fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit) or chills,
B. Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing,
C. Extreme fatigue from illness, with muscle or body aches,
D. Headaches related to an acute illness
E. New and remarkable loss of taste, smell, and appetite
F. Sore throat and congestion
G. Nausea, or vomiting, and/or diarrhea,

It is not likely you will experience all the symptoms above, and so if you are experiencing any of the symptoms and feel ill, you must stay at home and isolate yourself from others to see if further illness develops. In general, there are no illnesses that you want to bring to a classroom or the workplace.

If an employee is ill in addition to informing the COVID-19 officer, just as with any illness, the employee should call the supervisor to inform them that he or she will not be coming to work and should follow normal procedures with HR for requesting a sick day.

If an OMS 1 or OMS 2 student becomes ill, call your COVID-19 officer and notify the Associate Dean for Medical Education that you are ill following the normal processes.

If an OMS 3 or OMS 4 student, notify the COVID-19 officer who is the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs and your DSME and preceptor that you will not be coming in and follow their further instructions.

III. VCOM CAMPUS PREVENTIVE HEALTH POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR VCOM CAMPUS OPERATIONS UNDER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

If fully vaccinated, and you have provided evidence to the appropriate COVID-19 officer you do not need to wear a mask on campus. You should however continue to use the hand sanitizers and good hygiene. You should socially distance whenever possible. Do not congregate in halls, parking lots, bathrooms, library, or other small areas where social distancing cannot be done.

Safety Measures related to Restroom Capacity The restrooms’ capacity is limited to the number of people in the stalls and no more than 3 persons waiting inside the bathroom appropriately 4 foot self-distanced. For this reason, to avoid congregating by bathrooms, employees should attempt to use bathrooms at times when students are not on a break (not at the 10-minute period before the hour ie: 9:50 to 10, 10:50 to 11, or from 12 to 12:15). Employees and students should wash hands for 20 seconds or more and use hand sanitizer.
**Practice Good Hygiene** Avoid touching your face with your hands. Wash hands frequently for 20 seconds or more. Use the hand sanitizer frequently esp. before/after touching doors, elevators, stair rails and frequently used surfaces. Hand sanitizer stations have been set up throughout the building.

**Avoid Touching Shared Items or Surfaces** Employees and students should avoid sharing items such as pens, phones, computers, or other hand-held items.

Continue to **Avoid Others Who Are Ill on or off campus** whether at home or in transit to avoid bringing COVID or other illnesses to campus. If a faculty member or medical student cares for patients who are ill, continue to use appropriate precautions (masks, gloves, and other appropriate protections) in the medical setting in order to avoid bringing COVID-19 to campus.

---

**IV. VACCINES** We recognize that Employees and Students must participate in vaccination to assure the safety of the VCOM Campuses (as well as for the safety of patients and others in the Clinical Training Sites). Vaccination is the only key to assuring each individual employee’s and student’s safety and for the safety of the patients being cared for.

Many organizations such as the EEOC, OSHA, the national organizations overseeing health for Colleges and Universities, and the CDC have determined that vaccination may be required for employees in order to offer a safe workplace. Therefore, VCOM is currently requesting that all employees receive the vaccine. OSHA, EEOC, and the CDC have all provided support for requiring the vaccine for employees.

While there are many states that have approved that a College or University may require the vaccine to be on campus, vaccination is not yet a mandate by VCOM to be on campus. Vaccination is a requirement however to not wear a mask on campus or to participate in activities that may expose others such as patient care.

Vaccines are now readily available for all at this time, and therefore any student or employee having difficulty obtaining the vaccination may request assistance from the COVID-19 officer who will assist them in the process.

In Virginia the vaccine may be mandated by College campuses, according to the Attorney General. The remaining states of Carolinas, Alabama, and Louisiana currently have legislation being decided to accomplish the same. Therefore, mandatory vaccination is anticipated in the future in order to provide a safe work and College environment, and so all employees and students should register and receive the vaccine as soon as possible. Employees and students should then provide evidence of their vaccination card to their COVID-19 officer so they may attend campus without a mask.

If an employee is unable to comply with obtaining the vaccine, he or she should meet with the COVID-19 Officer and the Dean or appropriate Division Officer to develop a plan. VCOM recognizes there are medical and/or religious exemptions and those showing evidence of the exemption will be accommodated. Vaccination is still required for these individuals to care for patients or for the not wearing a mask if not fully vaccinated.

- Students in the OMS 1 and OMS 2 years must report to their COVID officer and the Associate Dean for Medical Education if they are having difficulty in obtaining the vaccine or if they have a verified contraindication. As additional early clinical experiences will be added in upcoming blocks and Standardized Patient exams this
block, if the student is seeking accommodations, he or she must apply for the accommodations through the COVID-19 officer.

- Students in the OMS 3 and OMS 4 year, as a healthcare worker, are expected to receive the vaccine. Students in this setting will also be subject to the requirements of their clinical training site. If unable to receive the vaccine, the student may apply for accommodations through their COVID-19 officer (the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs).

- The above requirements for vaccination are the same as other immunizations a student must receive to enter medical school and be involved in caring for a patient (whether a standardized patient or patient in the clinical setting).

- Students unable to obtain the vaccination must submit a request for accommodations to their COVID-19 officer and provide appropriate documentation. A formal review process will follow to determine if accommodations can be made. If accommodations cannot be made, a delay in the program may occur until accommodations can be made or the threat of COVID-19 is resolved.

- Students in the OMS 3 and OMS 4 years who are caring for patients are also considered healthcare workers and required to have the vaccination in order to participate in patient care. Students in the OMS 3 and OMS 4 years who are experiencing difficulty in obtaining a vaccination for COVID-19 should contact their COVID-19 officer (the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs). If unable to receive the vaccine, a formal review process for any requested accommodations will follow.

- Students in the OMS 3 and OMS 4 years must realize that the individual clinical site will have their own requirements regarding COVID-19 vaccinations. Students who do not follow or comply with the site requirements and precautionary procedures will be brought back to campus to determine if alternative arrangements are appropriate and can be made. This may require alternate site placement of the student or a delay in the student’s program.

B. **Flu shots and other vaccines:** Students and employees were strongly recommended to have seasonal flu shot. While flu season is over, the recommendation will be true in the fall as well. All other requirements of vaccinations for medical students still remain.

C. **Once fully vaccinated for COVID-19** (approx. 14 days after 2 doses), the employee or student will only need to complete the MyhealthTracer.com application monthly or if they are ill or exposed to COVID-19 and will not be required to wear a mask on campus. Students should produce the vaccination card or a picture of their vaccination card to demonstrate full vaccination.

V. **VISITORS ON CAMPUS**

A. **Visitors on campus** must sign in and visitors will remain limited in the campus buildings to those for business purposes and those approved by supervisors. If an employee wishes to bring a visitor to the building, they should request approval for the visitor through his or her supervisor and should only have visitors for business purposes.

B. **Visitors on campus should be limited to those vaccinated.**

C. **Scheduled meeting with visitors attending on campus:** All multi-person meetings on campus that include outside visitors will be limited and must be pre-approved by a supervisor – who should have verbal approval from their Division Officer or the Campus Dean. In addition, all
meetings will be limited to the number approved under the guidelines currently allowed in
the state or community.

VI. TRAVEL

A. TRAVEL WITHIN THE U.S. In general, travel is discouraged during COVID-19 pandemic times. Employees and students are recommended to limit their travel (as the CDC recommends) so to reduce their exposure to COVID-19. Other requirements:

- Vaccinations for all who are traveling. The CDC states if Fully Vaccinated the employee or student Can Safely Travel in the United States. If not vaccinated, travel is a risk factor for COVID-19.
- For students, travel remains limited to block breaks, summer break, holiday breaks, and vacations.
- Employees and students are expected to NOT travel to areas where a COVID-19 outbreak or “hot spot” occurs.
- Employees who are not yet vaccinated must inform the COVID officer and their Supervisor of any out of state travel plans in advance, must be approved, and must use the MyHealthTracer application daily so to identify any impact to others, should the employee become ill.
- Safe activities on travel for faculty and students such as outdoor camping, hiking, etc. are still recommended while avoiding beaches, concerts, and other large public gatherings that are considered super-spreaders.

B. TRAVEL INTERNATIONALLY

A. Employees and Students: International travel remains discouraged at this time and prohibited for those who are not fully vaccinated. Only employees who have been fully vaccinated may travel internationally at this time.

a. An employee should realize that international law may not be the same and the employee may be detained in an international setting (as is currently common under COVID-19). If the employee is detained, he or she will be required to use leave for the days missed, and if all leave is exhausted may be required to use unpaid leave. If traveling to an international site that is considered high-risk (level 3 or level 4) the employee who is vaccinated must still self-quarantine upon return for a period of 5 days before returning to campus and must have a negative COVID-19 test.

b. Students: International travel for students requires pre-approval by the COVID-19 officer and the Campus Dean. Unless a student is fully vaccinated all international travel is prohibited and will not be approved. Students should not travel to any country where COVID-19 is increasing or high risk (level 3 or 4) as a minimum of a five-day quarantine is required before returning to campus and a negative COVID-19 test. Students must be aware that even if international travel is approved, and return to the US is delayed, the student may or may not be able to make up missing exams, labs, or mandatory learning events. Missing such events may delay the student’s program and cause the student to have to make up such work over block break or in the summer. Therefore, the student must have prior approval from medical education before international travel.
c. ALL FACULTY AND STUDENTS must follow the CDC guidelines as well as those specified above following international travel. If planning travel, please review the following and follow these guidelines as well as those in b. and c. above. 

VII. DELIVERY OF THE OMS 1 AND OMS 2 ACADEMIC PROGRAMS ON CAMPUS
Safety measures will continue for the curriculum to be delivered in a variety of settings and curriculum delivery styles.

A. ALTERNATING TIMES DEDICATED TO STUDENTS IN CLASSROOMS ANB LABS
The classrooms will continue to be altered between first-year and second-year students. Classrooms will continue to be cleaned at noon and each evening. Classrooms will follow the capacity restrictions to allow for 6-foot distancing. (If a state announces a move from Phase 3 back to Phase 2 (or similar restrictions) the classrooms may be moved back to a 35% capacity.)

B. MASKS are to be worn at all times unless fully vaccinated and may be worn by others if the vaccinated student prefers to wear one. To be approved to not wear a mask, the student must provide the proof of vaccination to the COVID-19 officer and the proof of vaccination will be tracked to assure those who are not vaccinated are wearing masks. A list of those students who must wear a mask (who have not been cleared as vaccinated) will be provided to the Medical Education Department.

C. ACADEMIC CALENDARS The Associate Deans for Medical Education on each campus will continue to provide the academic calendars. The academic calendar will list when the classes or lab occurs, and whether the educational lecture or lab is a mandatory learning event or an asynchronous learning event.

D. SEAT ASSIGNMENTS will continue.

E. LABORATORIES All Laboratories are considered as mandatory learning events. All students must attend laboratories and/or have an excused absence (which will require remediation). Masks must be worn by all students who are not vaccinated.

F. ANATOMY LABORATORY will be split to two sessions where there will be no more than 50% of the class present along with 4 or 5 instructors in the anatomy laboratory at any one time.
   • There will be approximately 3 to 4 students per lab table for each lab session, lasting 2 hours in the lab.
   • Masks must be worn by all students who are not vaccinated.
   • When the students meet to review cases in small groups, the group will consist of 6 to 9 students. These may be planned in person or via zoom as directed by the Course Director.

G. PHYSICAL DIAGNOSIS AND OMM LABORATORIES will be split where no more than 50% of a class is in the laboratory at one time with 4 to 6-foot distancing between tables in a head to foot separation so to decrease exposures.
   • Students who are not vaccinated will still be assigned to other lab partners who are not vaccinated. All other students who are vaccinated may now choose partners.
VII. DELIVERY OF THE OMS 3 AND OMS 4 CLINICAL PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS

VCOM initially (2020–present) determined new requirements for the OMS 3 and OMS 4-year students that allowed students to finish their academic program on time. This was accomplished by eliminating electives and providing a self-quarantine time between rotations where students completed on-line work. These requirements will remain in place through July 1, 2021.

Beginning on July 1, 2021; the following academic requirements will apply for OMS 3 and OMS 4 students.

A. OMS 3 ACADEMIC PROGRAM BEGINNING JULY 1 2021.

The clinical OMS 3 year in 2021–2022 Academic year will include 10, four-week periods, with 9 dedicated to clinical rotations and 1 to a four-week research period.

- The core eight required rotations will be in the following fields: family medicine, pediatrics, OB/GYN, surgery, psychiatry, rural primary care, and 2 internal medicine clinical rotation months.
- The third-year selective has been restored. The selective must be completed in a VCOM core site. A list of selectives will be provided in the 2021–2022 handbook.
- A Research four-week course period has been moved from year 4 to year 3 to enable the student to begin their research earlier, providing more time for data collection, study, and publication.
- Vaccination: All OMS 3 students will be required to be vaccinated for the fall term unless a medical condition prohibits vaccination.
  - For those students who are unable to receive the vaccine, their program may be delayed to allow for a quarantine period between rotations (this varies by requirements of the site). In addition, each clinical site has the right to require vaccination for clinical participation as the student is considered a healthcare worker. Therefore, the clinical site may specify if they will allow students who are not vaccinated to participate or not. If a student has a medical condition that does not allow vaccination, the Clinical Affairs department will assist the student where possible in locating a core rotation site where one exists at another location. Students should be aware this may delay their education.
- Clinical Educational Modules and post-rotation exams will continue to accompany all required rotations.
- The Geriatrics rotation was discontinued for OMS 3 students was discontinued due to restrictions by the Geriatric clinical sites. The Geriatrics curriculum is being moved to the OMS 1 and OMS 2 years, where the student will be able to experience longitudinal care of Geriatric care. The experience will be done by telemedicine until Geriatrics facilities allow students to participation on site.

B. OMS-4 CLINICAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS for the 2021–2022 academic year

History of fall 2020 to spring 2021 to date: Nationally ACOM, AAMC, AOA, and the AMA, determined the OMS-4 students would burden the healthcare system and place both students and patients at risk and limited OMS-4 students to one elective rotation.
outside the student’s institution/core site (through the VSLO system). VCOM students were able to complete elective rotations in the VCOM core hospitals where residencies existed. VCOM students could complete electives within the VCOM core hospital system. Additional OMS-4 educational experiences outside of clinical experiences were added which included ultrasound courses and residency prep courses (or boot camps) for certain specialties. Students were also able to participate in some rotations using telemedicine (such as EM). Some of these options will continue as they were rated by previous students as preferable. The result of students being able to access electives through the VCOM Core system was that had a greater than 94% first match and a 99.9% final match of OMS 4 students to residency across campuses.

Beginning in July 2021, the following curriculum will apply for OMS 4 students.

i. **One (1) four-week period for professional development.** This may be taken in one or two-week periods to allow students to complete residency interviews and the other requirements for completing the on-line professional development curriculum.

ii. **Five (5) elective rotations are allowed** and these were designed to prepare the fourth year student for the field the student wishes to enter. Students will plan their electives when meeting with the OMS IV Dean (with input and advisement by the clinical chairs).

iii. The electives that are possible will be at least one elective outside the VCOM system and four within the VCOM Core hospital system. Students may rotate to any of the VCOM Core system hospitals depending upon the availability of the rotation. The Director for Clinical Rotations will assist the student in determining the rotation availability.

iv. The requirements for the 4th year are listed in the handbook.

v. Outside electives are currently restricted to one by national groups and VSLO unless a VCOM site does not offer the rotation for residency exposure. This restriction is not a VCOM restriction and is again one being imposed nationally.

vi. **It is not possible at this time to list which electives can be done outside VCOM’s Core hospital system. This will be determined nationally and where possible by the Associate Dean for OMS 4 and the Director for 4th year rotations. The Associate Dean for OMS 4 will assist students with the current rules and restrictions for rotations outside of VCOM’s Core hospitals.**

vii. Students should recognize there are many opportunities for rotations with residency programs within the VCOM’s Core hospitals and students should seek to utilize those sites with residencies of interest first.

viii. **In addition to electives, student must complete selective requirements.** These are based on knowledge required to enter residency and some are to be tailored to the field the student is to enter. The 4 required core **selective rotations** for the 2021-2022 academic year include the following: One (1) 4-week surgical selective, One (1) 4-week medicine selective, One (1) 4-week intensive medicine selective, and
One (1) additional 4-week medicine or surgical selective (depending on whether the student plans to enter a medical or surgical field).

ix. The student also has a required **1 (one) 4-week Emergency Medicine rotation.**

x. The choices for the fourth year selective(s) must be made from the 4th year Selective Rotations list in the handbook.

xi. **Interviews for Residency:** In 2020, for the first-time residencies began interviewing virtually. OMS 4 Students should be aware that Online interviews for residency may or may not continue and so a rising fourth year student must be prepared for both types of interview. OMS 4 Students should seek to interview early in the cycle. Ultimately, at this time, whether the interview process will be in-person or the choice of virtual interviews is up to each residency site. The Associate Dean for OMS 4 and GME will provide further information on a program used to prepare students for residency interview.

C. **All OMS-3 and OMS-4 students** are required to use the MyHealthTracer.com online application each day until he or she is fully vaccinated and have provided the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs with proof of vaccination. After vaccination the student is only required to use the application to report illness or significant exposures, and a once per month report of no illness-when no illness has occurred. Students must log their vaccinations and provide a copy of their vaccination card to the Director of Clinical Rotations for their year (OMS 3 or OMS 4). All OMS 3 and OMS 4 students are expected to complete vaccination as they are considered a healthcare worker. Recognize that many clinical sites for electives will not allow students to rotate unless fully vaccinated.

D. **Student Seeking a Waiver to NOT Be Vaccinated**

Beginning 1 June 2021, any student not vaccinated who is involved in clinical site education will be required to submit a medical excuse to the COVID-19 officer (Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs) for not being vaccinated. These will be reviewed with the Dean and others as necessary while making every effort to keep the student’s information as confidential as possible. Clinical sites where the student will be rotating may require vaccination or other proof as to why the student is not vaccinated. If this occurs, the student will be informed prior to sharing of information on why the student is not vaccinated. Those students not vaccinated may be required to complete their clinical education in sites or practices identified by the College who will accept students who have not been vaccinated.

E. Students may now see patients with COVID-19 if fully immunized and if wearing appropriate protections as designated by the Clinical Site. The student who is not vaccinated must seek approval to see potential COVID-19 patients under their physicians’ guidance and of course avoid seeing patients with known COVID-19. This includes patients under investigation (PUI).

F. **Students** in clinical education should report any illness to their clinical education site and assure that he or she is excused for the day if experiencing any symptom of illness. **Notification of Illness or Symptoms of COVID-19 and/or unprotected exposures or any illness where they will not be attending a rotation:**

- The clinical faculty member with whom they are rotating
- The site coordinator and DSME (if in a VCOM core site) and
• The COVID-19 Officer (who is the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs).
• Log the illness on MyHealthTracer.com.
• Students should anticipate that all missed clinical rotations days will need to be remediated to pass the rotation and this can generally be done on weekends if a small number of days.

G. **Avoiding COVID-19 in the Social Setting:** As a matter of professionalism, students must also attempt to avoid contracting COVID-19 from social environments. In addition to the vaccine, this includes washing hands frequently, followed by hand sanitizer, and social distancing. Students must avoid large gatherings that do not observe these same rules.

H. **Avoiding COVID-19 in the Medical Workplace:** Students must be aware of the CDC guidelines for all clinical providers to minimize the spread of the infection: These include obtaining the COVID-19 vaccination, follow PPE guidelines, actively self-screen and be knowledgeable of symptoms of COVID-19 before entering a health care facility, and optimize the use of PPE so to preserve supplies. Students should be observant of these policies as determined by the clinical site as they apply to the learning environment.

I. **Communication:** Students are required to communicate! VCOM OMS-3 and 4 students are required to inform the following should they have symptoms consistent with a person under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19. These notifications should occur whether the student has laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 illness or is in self-quarantine awaiting results:
- Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs as the COVID-19 Officer for students in the clinical years
- Clinical Faculty Preceptor
- Site Coordinator
- Director of Student Medical Education (DSME)

**Summary:** VCOM expects OMS-3 and 4 students to model exceptional physician professional behavior to safeguard their health and the health of the public. This is accomplished through vaccination, early recognition of signs and symptoms, taking timely protective actions to avoid the transmission of COVID-19 to others in the clinical setting, and reporting their situation to those responsible for their learning and well-being.

VCOM students should be aware that state and local health departments may adapt recommended testing guidelines to respond to rapidly changing local circumstances and so should check email daily.
VCOM students should stay abreast of the COVID-19 criteria of their clinical site through the DSME, if not more often, which includes information on testing and treatment.

**Students are to notify the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs if not being provided PPE by their clinical site so VCOM can provide PPE for the student.**

For the information provided above, VCOM credits the following resources: CDC website, NIH guidelines, recommendations by AACOM, AAMC, AMA, and the AOA, the US Department of Education, as well as other state and national organizations (too numerous to mention) who have been essential in providing guidance and information in the continual updating of COVID 19 requirements and restrictions.
SECTION 2: VCOM WORKPLACE POLICIES RELATED TO COVID-19, FOR EMPLOYEES ONLY

EMPLOYEES AT HIGH-RISK FROM COVID-19 AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Employees who are considered to be at increased risk for experiencing severe illness due to a COVID-19 infection should consult with their medical provider and follow their recommendations as to safety of attendance, before attending on campus.

- **Risk Factors:** Persons at-risk generally include (but not limited to) the following: those with current cancer, chronic kidney disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, organ transplantation, morbid obesity, serious heart conditions, sickle cell blood disorder and blood clotting disorders. Additional conditions are listed on this site from time to time and so persons with chronic disease of any type should check with their physician and check the website: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extraprecautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html.

- **Age as a risk factor:** If you are older than 65 and in good health, age is considered a relative risk as complications from COVID-19 have been seen to increase with age. Age alone is not a high-risk factor requiring leave.

A. **REQUESTING MEDICAL LEAVE DUE TO HIGH-RISK CONDITIONS:**

Employees may request medical leave due to high-risk medical conditions must follow the procedures for requesting medical leave listed in the employee handbook. Policies for pay and benefits for employees who take medical leave will follow those listed in the employee handbook.

B. **EMPLOYEE REQUESTS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Employees requesting accommodations to their work environment (including requesting to work remotely) must apply through Human Resources. Under Phase 3, and when most employees are fully vaccinated, the risk is mitigated. Those employees without contraindications to receiving the vaccine are therefore expected to receive the vaccine.

- Those employees who do not receive the vaccine due to a medical condition restricting receiving the vaccine will be reviewed to see if the employee can perform all functions of their position from home or if the employee can be temporarily accommodated. If accommodations are not possible and the duties of the position cannot be performed at home, the employee must take a leave according to the employee handbook.

- Employee are expected to become fully vaccinated and to return to the workplace no later than June 30, 2021. The employee may also request accommodations. HR will meet with the employee, their Division Officer and the Dean, and the COVID-19 officer to deem if the employee can complete equivalent work from home in a
productive and efficient manner. All requests cannot be granted, as certain positions are required on campus for efficiency and work requirements. The Dean and Division officer must ensure the campus duties may still be conducted appropriately and efficiently. The determination is made on a case-by-case basis and is both job dependent and medical condition dependent. If required, the Dean, upon consultation with HR may call an individual assessment team to determine if accommodations are appropriate and warranted. VCOM, where possible, will assist an employee in mitigating risk by reassignment of duties, shared job duties, or other modifications. Again, this is not always possible.

C. FAMILIES FIRST ACT and POLICIES REGARDING PAID SICK LEAVE FOR EMPLOYEES FOR COVID-19, AND/OR PAID SICK LEAVE FOR SELF QUARANTINE

Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) The FFCRA required employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19 from April 2020 through December 31, 2020 and no longer apply after this academic year.

D. REQUESTING UNPAID LEAVE

Additional unpaid leave may be requested, and approvals will depend upon if the reason for leave qualifies under the employee handbook or FMLA guidelines.

- If an employee has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine for reasons related to COVID-19 and he or she has used all paid sick leave (80 hours under FFCRA and 80 hours provided by VCOM), the employee must obtain a certification of need for the leave and provide this to their supervisor and Division Officer or Dean.
- If the Division Officer or Dean, along with the supervisor, have duties that both the supervisor and Dean or Division Officer approve to be done at home, the work from home duties will be assigned first. If the employee cannot complete their assigned duties from home (as deemed by the Dean or Division Officer), the employee will be required to take unpaid medical leave or unused sick days or vacation days, depending upon which the employee requests to use.
- It is the intent of VCOM Human Resources to work with employees who are experiencing difficulty where possible, however the essential duties required to operate the campus and academic programs must be met by the employees.

E. LEAVE AND ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CHILD CARE

VCOM understands that daycare or schools sometimes close for COVID-19 related reasons and that when this occurs, there may not be other suitable childcare available for the employee. Employees who have exhausted all leave may wish to consider developing childcare sharing arrangements with another VCOM employee (or others) to avoid unpaid leave or exhausting all leaves (paid or unpaid). Frequent school closures may continue so not to miss work hours beyond the hours of paid leave, employees should explore childcare arrangements for such needs.

F. CAREGIVERS FOR HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS IN FAMILY

Employees were initially granted their 80 hours of paid sick leave for DEPENDENT HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS IN FAMILY up through December 2020. This type of leave is no longer available.

G. HISTORY OF THE DECISIONS TO COMPLETE WORK AT HOME AND RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE.

During Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the pandemic, VCOM sought to work with all the employees balancing the work of the College that could be completed at home and that required in the workplace. This helped to reduce the number of persons in the building and the spread of COVID-19. VCOM had no true campus outbreaks due to these
safety measures. As we have moved into Phase 3, and all employees are vaccinated, it will be safe to return to the workplace. All employees will be expected to work on campus unless their position is approved as a working remotely approved position as determined by and approved by the Dean of the Campus or appropriate Division Officer and the President. In general, if prior to the pandemic you were working on campus, you will likely be required to work on campus now.

- Some employee positions may have been found to be effective from a mixture of work on campus and work from home. These positions are limited and will again require approval by the Campus Dean or Division Officer with final approval by the President.
- An employee requesting accommodations and being denied accommodations may also be reviewed by a Committee as to whether accommodations can be provided. Human Resources and the President will appoint the Committee to review the request. If the employee is approved this may also include reassignment of the employee to another position.

H. RETURNING TO CAMPUS AFTER EXPOSURE OR AFTER HAVING CONTRACTED COVID-19 EXPOSURES: Employees who have experienced a known exposure to a person who is ill with COVID-19 and who are not fully vaccinated, will be required to at self-quarantine. This is for 10 days and a COVID-19 test is recommended. If fully vaccinated, a self-quarantine will not be required unless the employee experiences symptoms. The employee must use MYHEALTHTRACER.COM throughout the time-period.

I. RETURN OF EMPLOYEES AFTER HAVING CONTRACTED COVID-19 According to the current guidelines, employees who have contracted COVID-19 may now return to campus after 10 days, IF the employee has been without fever for at least the last 4 days of that 10-day period. If the employee is still ill at 10 days or has any symptoms, he or she will need to be seen again by their physician and not return until the employee tests negative. Paid sick days, vacation days, and holidays may be applied if the employee requests use of vacation and holidays.

J. EMPLOYEE OBLIGATION TO NOTIFY THE DIRECTOR FOR HUMAN RESOURCES OF ILLNESS Employees must still notify the Director for Human Resources, as the COVID-19 point of contact, if they become ill with any COVID-19 symptoms and must log this on the MyHealthTracer.com application. The notification should be as early in the day as possible. The employee should also notify their supervisor of the illness by either email or phone (or both when possible). The appropriate Division Officer and/or Dean will also be notified. Employees are also to report to the Director for Human Resources as the COVID-19 officer if they are aware of other employees who become ill with COVID-19 symptoms, so appropriate testing and notifications occur. VCOM will continue to work closely with the health department on testing of employees and appropriate tracking procedures for others in the building who are exposed to an employee who tests positive for COVID-19.

K. EMPLOYEE RISK AWARENESS AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK. All students, faculty, and staff are returning to the campus at their own risk. As it is possible for any student, faculty, or staff member to contract COVID-19 at the grocery store, gas station, or other public areas, and therefore all persons have some exposure risks, VCOM assumes no responsibility for any person who may contract COVID-19 while an active employee. In fact, employees should be aware that it is likely that a student or employee will be exposed to COVID-19
over the next several months and that the employee may infect one or more persons on a VCOM campus, **therefore it is imperative that all on the College Campus obtain the vaccine.** This is for the health all employees and your families. Those employees with concerns should meet with the Dean and HR, or their Division Officer and HR, to have questions or concerns answered regarding their assumption of risk.

L. **NOTIFICATIONS:** When an alteration of the academic schedule or work schedule occurs, notifications to all employees will be made utilizing email. **Employees are required; therefore, to read their campus emails daily.**
SECTION 3: EVENTS ON CAMPUS

Events on campus will remain limited in number to avoid the spread of COVID-19 until further notice. All Events on campus must be pre-approved by the office of the Campus Dean and the President.

a. **INDOOR Events with Guests from outside the campus community** must be pre-approved by and must be planned by Administration. These will be limited in number and include such events as graduations, board meetings, and other such mandatory events. These will be limited in number and in number of attendees. All outside attendees will be required to be vaccinated or have a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours.

- During times when state or community requirements restrict the College to fewer numbers of attendees, the state and community guidance will super-cede VCOM’s requirements.
- In addition to the above capacity requirements, attendance will be only for the number where 6-foot distancing is possible and all other precautions will apply.
- All normal cleaning and safety procedures will be followed.
- As the VCOM campuses are now greater than 80% of the students and employees vaccinated, opportunity more events to occur on campus (without outside guests) will exist. When held, room capacity limits, six-foot distancing, masks, and hand sanitizing requirements will still apply. Prior approval by the President and Dean is still required.

b. **OUTDOOR Events are also Limited to Students, Faculty, and Staff:** On Campus Outdoor events must be preapproved by the Dean and the President.

- Events held outdoors for students have occurred earlier in the year without significant issue. More will be planned when the student body and employees have achieved optimal vaccination percentages.
- The student outdoor events are currently generally limited to the class size and 50 employees or less. (The total number being less than 240). When these types of larger events are held, the numbers will allow the 6 to 10 foot separation of persons (or between family and/or groups of room-mates). Masks must be worn and hand sanitizing and other precautions followed. All such events must be approved by the Dean and President and will engage the COVID-19 officer.
These events may be restricted from time to time due to changes within the state or community where guidance has been provided that supersedes VCOM requirements during times of outbreaks. VCOM administration will inform the students, faculty, and staff of the requirements for each event via email.

c. Larger OUTDOOR Events with Guests (ie: graduation or white coat): Larger outdoor and indoor events are planned with approval by the President and Campus Dean, and administration will assure all community and state guidelines are followed for each event. These events are often not held on the VCOM campus and are held on the University Campus or a community venue. When being held on the University Campus or using a community venue, the safety precautions of both VCOM and the University or Community will be followed. These guidelines will be announced by administration for each event.

d. Proof and/or verifications of vaccination will be required to attend all large events or events where persons from outside the campus are invited or a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours. This will be required for most indoor and outdoor events held on campus for those over the age of 6. (For those unable to provide verification of vaccination, a negative COVID 19 test result will be required.)

SECTION 4: VCOM FACILITIES PLAN FOR SAFE OPERATIONS OF THE CAMPUS

The Vice President for Facilities serves on the College-wide COVID-19 Committee and each campus team. The Director of Facilities on each VCOM Campus will assure campus specific procedures are followed. The policies put in place in 2020 have been followed to date and allowed the campus community to remain safe. The policies and procedures below will be followed After April 1, 2021 as the Campuses have moved to Phase 3. These policies will be re-evaluated for any modifications if the campus moves back to Phase 1 or Phase 2.

1. Signage will remain throughout the campus buildings reminding students and employees on ways to stay safe, including but not limited to: hand-washing, hand sanitizer, staying home if ill, physical distancing, face masks, and banning congregation.

2. To ensure physical distancing and keeping less than 50% capacity in any one classroom or laboratory, all capacity will also assure 6-foot distancing is possible. (VCOM has remodeled event facilities for classrooms, removed excess chairs, ensured technology is in place, and altered student schedules to continue these safety practices). Once all employees and students have been vaccinated it is likely that restrictions will continue to be relaxed. VCOM will keep employees and students notified of changes in a timely manner.

3. Visitors have been limited to essential visitors for business purposes only and all administrators are aware and employees are required to consult with supervisors before inviting visitors.

4. All faculty, staff, and students have been advised to stay at home if ill.

5. A small amount of “grab and go” food services will be provided through healthy vending and self-check-out kiosks; however, everyone is still advised to bring their own lunch for safety.
6. In the classrooms, physical distancing of 6 to 7 feet will be required between students and the speaker. If the appropriate distancing is provided, and the students are wearing masks, the speaker may remove his or her mask in order to be heard.

7. All classrooms are limited to 50% capacity including the speaker.

8. Laboratory attendance also is restricted to 50% capacity per room.

9. Hand sanitizing stations are placed at each entrance, elevators, classroom entrances, and other common areas throughout the building.

10. Congregating in the hallways is not allowed.

13. Capacity of restrooms is limited to the number of people in the stalls and three persons waiting to appropriately self-distance.

14. VCOM has increased the number of cleaning staff and cleaning protocols.

15. Students are advised to study at home when possible. Students are allowed to study within the building is limited to 8 am to 10 pm Monday through Thursday; 8 am to 8 pm on Friday; and Saturday 10 am to 8 pm. Sunday study hours are restricted to between 12 noon and 10 pm. Physical distancing protocols still apply.

16. Each small group study room will be posted as to maximum occupancy and physical distancing restrictions. These restrictions will also apply in the library.

17. Students will not be allowed to study in lecture hall space after 10 pm so the classrooms can be cleaned nightly.

18. Students wishing to study on campus must sign-in documenting where he or she will be studying. These will be limited to areas designated for study and available on a first come, first serve basis. In general, medical students as adult learners are asked to study at home if at all possible.

19. Prevention education has been provided to students, faculty, and staff following CDC guidelines. All areas for work have been evaluated for workspace physical distancing.

20. Conference rooms will be limited to the number that can appropriately self-distance. All others will join by ZOOM.

21. Cleaning:
   a. Classrooms will be wiped at night and at noon
   b. All surfaces will be cleaned with a germicidal disinfectant that contains a minimum of 75% alcohol and/or known chemical that kills COVID-19.
   c. All door handles, stair-rails, and other frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned each evening.
   d. All faculty and staff are provided with a cannister of wipes to clean their desks and in office surfaces each evening and between visitors (other faculty, staff, and students) in their office.
   e. If a student, faculty, or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and they have been coming to campus, the area they occupied will be thoroughly disinfected and be vacated for an appropriate period of time while cleaned.

22. VCOM students have independent housing and this is not owned by the College. Students and Employees have been directed to follow CDC guidelines as to care and cleaning of the home.

23. VCOM students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to use outdoor space for breaks, lunches or study, and these areas will be wiped with disinfectant a minimum of three (3) times daily.
Faculty and staff will be responsible for wiping the patio tables with their own wipes that have been provided by the College.

SECTION 5: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PLAN

History: In March of 2020, VCOM increased the number of licenses for ZOOM, making this technology available to all employees and students for meetings and educational sessions. VCOM has always used a technology referred to as VCOM TV where all lectures, presentations, and some laboratory demonstrations were recorded and placed in a restricted site for the VCOM community. Using this technology allowed VCOM to adapt to offering virtual education to all students with minimal educational disruption. Faculty and staff who used desktops were provided with laptops so they could work from home. As VCOM employees and students have and are returning to the Campus buildings, as of April 1, 2021, the following

Instructions for the use of ZOOM technology and other online meetings

1. All faculty and staff are to use ZOOM technology were possible for larger meetings or meetings where physical distancing may be challenging.
2. All faculty and staff are welcome to use ZOOM technology for smaller meetings where effective.
3. Some face-to-face meetings are still required and when this occurs masks and six foot distancing is still recommended.
4. More privacy restrictive technology may be used for meetings such as professionalism and ethics boards and promotion boards.
5. Faculty and staff have been trained on the use of ZOOM technology, so meetings can occur with ease of use.

Information Technology Support for the Department of Medical Education, for Simulation, and for Faculty Support

6. All faculty preparing the curriculum to be delivered in-person and also to be delivered virtually for asynchronous learning may request IT support and should notify their IT Department if having technical difficulty with on-line presentations or other IT needs.
7. IT will continue to support the recording of presentations by faculty, simulated standardized patient visit needs, and any needs regarding CANVAS.
8. Testing will continue to occur via Exam Soft, which can be utilized by students on campus and off-campus.
9. Students will be set up with individual appointments with IT to install the required educational software using the VCOM ticketing system.
10. Email addresses are provided by virtual means.
11. Appointments for ID badges will be set individually within the first two weeks on campus in fall of 2021.

The students will be provided with the appropriate information during orientation. Students, faculty, and staff will continue to use the help-desk for assistance.

SECTION 6. POLICIES FOR WHEN A STUDENT OR EMPLOYEE BECOMES ILL WHILE ON CAMPUS

The COVID-19 Officers are the:

- Associate Dean for Student Affairs for first and second-year students,
- Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs for third and fourth-year students, and the
- Director of Human Resources (for employees).

Each of these COVID-19 Officers will assist you with contacting a healthcare provider and for testing if you become ill on campus. In addition, they will connect you with the local health department as required.

If you become ill on campus, you will be placed in a room dedicated to the purpose of providing immediate isolation of those who become ill. From this point HR will assist all employees and the appropriate officer all students to arrange for transportation home and in finding/scheduling an appointment with a healthcare provider if needed.

Policy for Persons Who Develop Symptoms of COVID-19 While on Campus

1. Notify the COVID-19 Officer on campus
2. The COVID-19 Officer will assist you with obtaining a test for COVID-19 and notifying your local healthcare provider (by telemedicine or in-person).
3. The COVID-19 Officer will also assist you in notifying the local health department.
4. Each of these COVID-19 Officers will assist you with contacting a provider and testing with the local health department when requested.
5. While waiting on campus for disposition and transportation, you will be isolated in a room that has been established to protect you and others at VCOM from spreading the virus.
6. If you test negative, you were probably not infected at the time of the test, however until you have the results of the test, you must act in a manner as though the test is positive and self-quarantine.

COVID-19 Screening and Testing on Returning to Campus: Following the CDC’s guidance, all students and employees will not return to campus for at least 10 days after contracting COVID-19. If still experiencing symptoms, the employee must see a physician and have testing prior to return. Employees and students who are beyond 10 days from contracting COVID-19 and who are not experiencing symptoms do not require a negative test to return.
**Screening:** All persons coming to campus will continue to be screened with a questionnaire to deem if they are at risk for having COVID-19. This is required daily from those who are not vaccinated. This will be required monthly or only when ill if fully vaccinated. The screening tool is [myhealthtracer.com](http://myhealthtracer.com). The questionnaire will include temperature checks and symptom survey for all employees and students experiencing symptoms of illness. These measures have allowed VCOM to continue to be open and to help to keep our campus employees and students safe.

**VCOM will follow the state and local health department guidance** on testing of persons who demonstrate illness.

If you test positive, you will be asked to follow the advice of the local health department, as well as to read and follow the [CDC’s guidelines on protecting yourself and others when you test positive for COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/detail.html). You will also be required to follow the policy and procedures below.

If you test positive for COVID-19, and/or if you become ill at home and are waiting to be seen or to test, you should take all preventive measures to protect yourself and others while awaiting test results. You should also ask for the PCR test. The following guidance is found on the CDC website under **What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19** and includes:

- **Stay home.** Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without hospital care. Do not leave your home or visit public areas, except to get medical care.
- **Take care of yourself.** Get rest and stay hydrated. Take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen, to help you feel better.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you have trouble breathing or have any emergency warning signs. VCOM does not provide student health services. VCOM contracts with health providers off campus to ensure students have access to health care. Please see the [VCOM College Catalog and Student Handbook](https://www.vcom.vcu.edu) or talk to your VCOM COVID-19 Officer on accessing health care.
- **Avoid leaving your home except for healthcare purposes.**
- **Avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.**
- **Separate yourself from other people** within your home, stay in a specific room in your home away from other people and pets and do not share a bathroom if possible.
- **Assure others in your home wear face masks, practice handwashing and use hand sanitizer, use gloves** if possible, and **socially distance** a minimum of 6 feet or more from you when they bring something to your room.
- 7. **Eat on paper plates and use disposable utensils** if ill, carried to an outside trash area daily.
- 8. **Use tissues** to cover your mouth and dispose of in a trash bag that is removed nightly.
- 9. **Wash your hands frequently** with soap and water for 20 seconds
- 10. **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- 11. **Avoid** sharing personal household items, including but not limited to dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.
- 12. **Wash any items touched thoroughly** with soap and water or put in the dishwasher.
13. **Clean and disinfect** high-touch surfaces in your “sick room” and bathroom; wear disposable gloves. Let someone else clean and disinfect surfaces in common areas, but you should clean your bedroom and bathroom, if possible.

14. **If a caregiver or other person needs to clean and disinfect** a sick person’s bedroom or bathroom, they should do so only on an as-needed basis. The caregiver/other person should wear a mask and disposable gloves prior to cleaning.

15. **Clean all** high-touch surfaces include phones, remote controls, counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables with soapy water and then disinfectant. Be careful of electronics and water.

16. **If showing any of these signs, seek emergency medical care immediately:**
   - Trouble breathing and/or Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
   - New confusion or Inability to wake or stay awake
   - Severe fatigue and shortness of breath when walking
   - Bluish lips or face

2. **Self-Quarantine Following COVID-19 Illness after Testing Positive.** If you have become ill, or have tested positive for COVID-19, you may not return to campus for a period of 10 days from the onset of symptoms. In addition, the employee or student must ensure a minimum of 4 days symptom-free and without fever. **You are no longer required to test negative prior to returning to campus, if** you have abided by the CDC guidance listed and stay at home a full 10 days from when testing positive. This will help to protect others so you do not infect other students or employees.

3. **If testing positive, OMS-3 and OMS-4** students who have had COVID-19 may not return to the clinical site for a minimum of 10 days, must ensure a minimum of 4 days symptom-free and without fever; and follow the requirements of the clinical site as to the need for a negative test, therefore, the period may extend beyond 10 days if symptoms extend beyond that time period. For in-hospital rotations, the students must speak with the DSME. For ambulatory rotations, the student may speak with the Associate Dean and/or the preceptor. VCOM follows the policy to not require testing prior to returning as recommended by the CDC.
SECTION 8. COVID-19 OFFICERS, COMMITTEE MEMBERS, AND CONTACTS

COVID-19 College-Wide Contacts for Questions Regarding the Plan

- Contact and Email Address for questions from employees:
  Robert Hudson, Senior Director for Human Resources, rhudson@vcom.vt.edu

- Contact for State and National Accrediting Bodies and Departments of Health
  Debbie West EdD, Vice Provost, Institutional Planning and Accreditation, dwest@vt.vcom.edu
  Secondary contact: Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, DO President and Provost, dtrawlins@vt.vcom.edu

Lead contact for Students regarding Questions on this plan:

- Virginia 1st and 2nd year Students: Whitney Stokes, Associate Dean for Student Affairs
  wstokes@vt.vcom.edu

- Virginia 3rd and 4th year Students: Sofia Abraham-Hardee, DO, Associate Dean Clinical Affairs
  sabraham@vt.vcom.edu

- Auburn 1st and 2nd year Students: Jake Williamson Ph.D., Associate Dean Student Affairs
  jwilliamson@auburn.vcom.edu

- Auburn 3rd and 4th year Students: Robert Pepper DO, Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs
  rpepper@auburn.vcom.edu

- Carolinas 1st and 2nd year Students: Lindsey Ridgeway Ph.D. Associate Dean Student Affairs
  lridgeway@carolinas.vcom.edu

- Carolinas 3rd and 4th year Students: Lindsey Tjiattas-Saleski, DO Associate Dean Clinical Affairs
  ltjiattassaleski@carolinas.vcom.edu

- Louisiana 1st year Students: Nathan Kinnard, Associate Dean for Student Affairs
  nkinnard@ulm.vcom.edu

Lead Contacts for Employees for COVID-19 Questions - Campus Specific

Employee contacts: Robert Hudson, Senior Director for Human Resources and/or the
The Director of Human Resources on your campus.
I. VCOM COLLEGE-WIDE COVID-19 COMMITTEE APPOINTED MEMBERS AND CHARGES:

**Chair:** Robert Hudson, Senior Director for Human Resources and COVID-19 College-wide Officer

**Co-Chair:** Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, DO, President and Provost

**Co-Chair:** Vice Provost Institutional Planning, Accreditation & Student Support: Debbie West, EdD

The COVID-19 officers for each campus:

- Whitney Stokes, Associate Dean for Student Affairs wstokes@vt.vcom.edu
- Sofia Abraham-Hardee, DO, Associate Dean Clinical Affairs sabraham@vt.vcom.edu
- Jake Williamson Ph.D., Associate Dean Student Affairs jwilliamson@auburn.vcom.edu
- Robert Pepper DO, Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs rpepper@auburn.vcom.edu
- Lindsey Ridgeway Ph.D. Associate Dean Student Affairs lridgeway@carolinass.vcom.edu
- Lindsey Tjiattas-Saleski, DO Associate Dean Clinical Affairs
- Nathan Kinnard, Associate Dean for Student Affair nkinnard@ulm.vcom.edu

The Campus Deans from each Campus: Jan Willcox, DO, Virginia

- John Lucas D.O., Auburn (Interim)
- Matthew Cannon, DO, Carolinas
- Ray Morrison, DO, Louisiana

The Vice President for Finance and CFO: Chuck Swaha

The Vice Pres for Communications, Marketing, Website & Publications. Cindy Rawlins

The Vice President for Administrative Policy and Law: Honorable Randy Schuller

The Senior Vice President for Facilities and IT: Bill Price

Student representatives: One for OMS 1 and OMS 2 students

One for OMS 3 and OMS 4 students

**COVID-19 COLLEGE-WIDE COMMITTEE PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES**

- The Committee will be convened each block and/or more frequently as needed.
- The Committee will focus on policies and procedures and will follow the status of all Campuses and their response to COVID-19.
- The Committee will review national trends, including the impact from national decisions made by AACOM, COCA, the CDC, and or the Federal Government.
- The Committee will propose actions and changes by Administration to VCOM policies and procedures as needed to adapt to COVID-19, and the COVID-19 plan.
- Minutes will be taken by the Executive Assistant for the Senior Director for Human Resources.
- The impact of any changes to the overall College will also be reviewed and must be approved by the President and the Vice President for Institutional Policy and Administrative Law.
A Committee may also be appointed by the President to meet to review considerations for vulnerable students or employees when there are issues on accommodations that cannot be resolved by the COVID-19 Officer and the Campus Dean or Division Officer.

When the Committee meets on an employee or student all efforts will be taken to ensure confidentiality with only the Committee, the Campus Dean and/or the Division Officer who is the supervisor of the individual, and the President being knowledgeable of the decision made.

**Emergent Actions:**
The Committee or the President, Campus Dean, the Senior Director for Human Resources, the Senior Vice President, and the Vice Provost for Institutional Planning and Accreditation will meet on any emergent conditions that arise and may call a meeting of the Committee when needed. The Director of Human Resources and the Student COVID-19 Officer may also be included if there is a Campus outbreak.

In this case, the liaison with the local Health Department / District or their COVID-19 contact will be notified of new cases. The Directors of the local Health Departments where any of the VCOM Campuses are located, will be invited to be a member of the Campus Committee and will receive a copy of this plan as well as updates. The local Health Departments will be asked to perform contact tracing where needed. Confidentiality is maintained for all tracing.

**Health Department Contacts**
The Director of Human Resources and/or the Vice Provost, in consultation with the Campus Dean and the President, will inform the local Health Department if the Campus is impacted. The contact information for the Health Departments in each state is kept with the Director of Human Resources on that campus.

(Required to be posted)
The Virginia contact information is: New River Health District
Virginia Department of Health, 210 Pepper St. SE, Suite A, Christiansburg, VA 24073
Ph. (540) 585-3304 In addition, in Virginia, the local NRV Health Department Director, Noelle Bissell, MD serves on the VCOM-Virginia Campus Covid-19 Committee.
SECTION 9: VCOM CAMPUS RESPONSE TO A COVID-19 SUSPICIOUS CASE, POSITIVE CASE, OR CAMPUS OUTBREAKS

The following plan follows the Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) Decision Tree provided through the CDC. It should be noted; however, that VCOM will work closely with the local health department on confirmed cases who may have recommendations or additional requirements beyond what is written below.

A. WHEN SOMEONE BECOMES ILL WHO IS ON CAMPUS

All employees and students have been informed NOT to come to campus if he or she is ill. However, if someone becomes ill after arriving on campus, they must contact the COVID-19 Officer on Campus. The COVID-19 Officer will place the person in an isolated area.

1. An appropriate assessment of risk will occur to include:
   - Is this someone who became ill on campus or soon after leaving campus and does not have COVID-19 symptoms?
   - Is this someone who has COVID 19 symptoms and no diagnosis has been made?

2. If the employee or student has COVID-19 symptoms and is unable to drive himself/herself, arrangements will be made for the employee or student transportation. The employee or student will be seen by a physician of their choice.

3. Same day testing will be required and so the positive or negative test information will return quickly.

4. If a student or employee tests positive for COVID-19, that person may not return to campus for 10 days and at least 4 days without fever. The student or employee should call their COVID-19 Officer to be cleared to return to campus.

5. The CIFSS Division will work with the student to ensure that he or she is supported academically and for psychological effects. Supervisors will work with their employees.

6. Appropriate protective gear will be worn by those cleaning for the area where the employee was working. See the Facilities Plan for cleaning and disinfecting the area.

7. If a student or employee tests negative for COVID-19, they will be treated as all other who present with illnesses other than COVID-19 according to the faculty and staff handbooks and students according to the student handbook.

8. The COVID-19 Officer will have the employee or student perform appropriate tracking for exposures prior to becoming ill and since becoming ill and will maintain this tracking for the department of health and the MyHealthTracer.com app will be used. The name of the employee or student infected will remain confidential. The employee or student will be required to notify the local health department or ask the COVID-19 officer to notify on their behalf.

9. **VCOM will follow the state and local health department advice on closure** when there is a significant surge of cases in the community, local and state actions may close the campuses.

10. During a time of a reported positive case, there will be heightened monitoring. The monitoring will include close observation of students and employees reports of illness, absenteeism from tests and required on campus events, and other measures employed
as possible including contact tracing by the health department to ensure there is not an extended spread. Students and employees will be told to notify the COVID-19 Officer if they develop any symptoms. Testing will be supported.

B. COMMUNICATION

The President, the Campus Dean, COVID-19 Campus Committee, and the VP for Communications and Marketing will determine the best process to communicate the information regarding the news of possible exposure and any news to dismiss classes. This will be done in a manner in coordination with the local health department officials

1. VCOM will ensure the plan includes messages to counter potential stigma and discriminations.

2. In a circumstance where there is a confirmed COVID-19 case that has been on campus, VCOM recognizes and will ensure confidentiality of the student or staff member is maintained as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, and HIPAA.

SECTION 10: ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS WHILE OPERATING UNDER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

VCOM’s Center for Institutional, Faculty, and Student Success (CIFSS) on each campus provides academic assistance to VCOM students in a variety of ways. The following guidelines have been put in place to assure the provision of all forms of academic assistance during a restricted campus opening, during future campus closures, or should a student become ill and be quarantined off-campus due to COVID-19.

Academic Assistance

The Center provides nearly 1000 academic assistance meetings to OMS-1 through OMS-4 students each academic year. While most of these meetings occur in-person on campus, the Center does currently utilize other forms of technology for meetings with OMS-3 and OMS-4 students or with OMS-1 and OMS-2 students after hours and these methods will continue to be utilized.

While the campus is open, students may continue to schedule individual in-person appointments with the Directors for Student and Institutional Academic Success. However, students may also schedule a Zoom or phone meeting. Zoom and/or phone meetings are encouraged while the campuses are under COVID-19 restrictions and have worked well to date.

All appointments with the Directors, except in emergencies, must be made in advance using the Bookings link provided to the students. When scheduling, students will be prompted to specify their choice of setting (in-person, Zoom, or phone).

Should a Directors meet with students in-person:

- Students and the Director must wear face masks unless both are fully vaccinated
Students should arrive on time for their appointment and should avoid arriving early as waiting areas will not be available for student use.

Peer Tutoring
Peer tutoring sessions are held for OMS-1 and OMS-2 students prior to every examination. Typically offered in-person for an unlimited number of students, sessions will now be offered via Zoom to minimize student gatherings. The dates and times for peer tutoring sessions will be posted on CANVAS and on the block calendars.

Academic Advising
OMS-1 and OMS-2 students are assigned biomedical and clinical faculty academic advisors. Students may still meet with their academic advisors; however, Zoom meetings may also be held. When meet with a student or students in-person students and advisors must wear face masks if both parties are not fully vaccinated.

SECTION 11: COPING STRATEGIES AND AVOIDING THE STIGMA OF COVID-19

C. Mental Health Resources FOR STUDENTS

A pandemic can cause high levels of stress, which will affect each student in different ways. Fear and anxiety can cause strong emotions that may exacerbate a pre-existing mental health condition and/or initiate new symptoms. It is important that students take care of their mental health and have awareness of any red flags that indicate a need for help.

For emergency or non-emergency, confidential personal counseling, students have both on-campus and off-campus counseling options that are of no cost.

On-Campus Counseling

- VCOM employs a Mental Health Counselor on each campus and students are free to utilize the support of any of the four counselors regardless of which campus they attend.
  - Students may schedule non-emergency appointments through the Bookings link that has been previously provided to them and is also located in Canvas. Appointments are offered in person, by phone, or via Zoom (video conference).
  - Students can also contact any of the Directors of Counseling Services by email or phone.
    - Carolinas Campus: Natalie M. Fadel, PsyD nfadel@carolinas.vcom.edu 864-327-9875
    - Virginia Campus: Edward Magalhaes, PhD, LPC emagalhaes@vt.vcom.edu 540-231-1944
    - Auburn Campus: Mary A. Taylor, PhD, MS mtaylor@auburn.vcom.edu 334.442.4037
    - Louisiana Campus: David Boyle, PhD, LPC dboyle@ulm.vcom.edu 318.342.7100
Off-Campus Counseling

- In addition to VCOM’s Mental Health Counselors, VCOM contracts with mental health providers in the campus community to assure that VCOM students have readily accessible mental health services when preferred by the student. Local mental health services are free of charge and are available to students on each campus as well as immediate family members. In-person and telehealth options are available.
  - Carolinas Campus: **Spartanburg Area Mental Health Center (SAMHC)** [www.sparmhc.org](http://www.sparmhc.org) 864 585-0366. 24-hour emergency care line: 864-585-0366 or 1-800-277-1366
  - Virginia Campus: **New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS)** [www.nrvsc.org](http://www.nrvsc.org) 540-961-8300. 24-hour emergency care line: 540-961-8400

- **WellConnect**: For third and fourth year students, VCOM also contracts with WellConnect, a national mental health service that will facilitate in person counseling, phone sessions, or online sessions from any location. 24/7 emergency and non-emergency confidential line: 866-640-4777 or visit [WellConnectForYou.com](http://WellConnectForYou.com) School code: VCOM.

- **BetterHelp**: A national virtual counseling service available to all students who have United health insurance through VCOM. Video, phone, and text options are available for counseling. Students may set up a free appointment at: [www.betterhelp.com/united/](http://www.betterhelp.com/united/).

A variety of other resources are available to students in crisis:

- Students who feel they are experiencing an emergency should call 911.
- Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. [https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline)
  Provides immediate crisis counseling to people affected by natural or human caused disasters.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org), or Lifeline Crisis Chat to connect with a counselor via web chat. [https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 if you are in a crisis. Provides 24/7 mental health support via text message. [www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

The CDC and the Department of Mental Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health provide tips on how individuals can protect their mental health during these trying times, while also following guidelines set by health authorities to protect our physical health. VCOM also recommends these tips as guidelines to students:

**Know the signs and symptoms**

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can sometimes cause the following:
• Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones, your financial situation or job, or loss of support services you rely on.
• Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
• Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
• Worsening of chronic health problems.
• Worsening of mental health conditions.
• Increased use of tobacco, and/or alcohol and other substances.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

• People who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (for example, older people and people with underlying health conditions).
• Children and teens.
• People caring for family members or loved ones.
• Frontline workers such as health care providers and first responders, retail clerks, and others.
• Essential workers who work in the food industry.
• People who have existing mental health conditions.
• People who use substances or have a substance use disorder.
• People who have lost their jobs, had their work hours reduced, or had other major changes to their employment.
• People who have disabilities or developmental delay.
• People who are socially isolated from others, including people who live alone, and people in rural or frontier areas.
• People in some racial and ethnic minority groups.
• People who do not have access to information in their primary language.
• People experiencing homelessness.
• People who live in congregate (group) settings.

Healthy ways to cope with stress

Create structure

• Create a daily and/or weekly schedule. When working at home, have a dedicated study area in a location that is conducive to studying. Make it for study/work only and have all the things you need to make it your own.
• Set limits on time spent watching, reading or listening to news reports that cause you to feel anxious or distressed. A near-constant stream of news reports can be upsetting and distracting. Instead, seek CDC updates and practical guidelines at specific times during the day.
• Make space for activities and conversations that have nothing to do with the outbreak.
• Check in with yourself throughout the day to make sure you are in the driver’s seat of what you are doing with your mind and body. Minimize distractions while studying like phone and social media in order to maintain productivity and sense of control.

Maintain your physical health

• Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep most nights. Good quality, sufficient sleep not only helps to support your immune system but also helps you to better manage stress and regulate emotions. [See recommendations by the National Sleep Foundation.]
• Try to eat at regular times and opt for nutritious foods whenever possible. Some people may crave junk food or sugary snacks and be tempted to snack mindlessly when stressed or bored, and others may skip meals altogether.

• Maintain an exercise routine, even if you cannot go to the gym. Exercise at home using an online workout video, or go for a walk, run, or bike ride. Getting outside can also help to calm and reset your mind.

Stay Connected

• Taking care of your friends and your family can be a stress reliever, but it should be balanced with care for yourself. Helping others cope with their stress, such as providing social support, can also make your community stronger. During times of increased social distancing, people can still maintain social connections and care for their mental health. Virtual communication (like phones or video chats) can help you and your loved ones feel less lonely and isolated.

• Crises offer a time for community cohesion and social solidarity, and volunteering is one way to not only help others, but yourself as well. Science has repeatedly shown that volunteering can improve mental health. Check out this article for a list of organizations to donate to and this article for other ways to help your neighbors and community. You can also get involved with VCOM outreach opportunities.

• If you have children, talk to them honestly about what is going on in an age-appropriate manner. Help kids express their feelings in a positive way, whether playing in the backyard, drawing, or journaling. Check out these guides by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Child Mind Institute, or National Association of School Psychologists for tips on how to talk to your kids about coronavirus.

Take care of your spirit

• Find a place of worship that is streaming or recording services. If prayer is an important part of your life, make time for it. Stay connected to your church community through phone calls, emails, and video chats.

• Try meditation, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or another mindfulness or relaxation technique. Check out YouTube or phone apps such as Calm or Headspace for guided meditation exercises. Consider enlisting friends and family and practicing meditation together at least once a day. Mindfulness can help lower blood pressure, reduce stress, support your immune system, and protect brain health.

Continue or seek out mental health treatment

• If you are currently in mental health treatment, continue with your current plan if possible, being mindful of approaches to minimize contact with others. Consider reaching out to a mental health professional even if you haven’t before. Make sure you have ongoing access to any medications you need.

• Ask about video therapy or phone call appointments. Most states have already made emergency exemptions to insurance coverage for telehealth. Regulations have been temporarily relaxed to allow even non-medical software like Skype, Facetime, and Zoom to be used for telehealth. Contact your provider to ask about remote services.

• Avoid drugs and alcohol, particularly if you have a pre-existing mental health or substance use disorder. Check out online support groups and meetings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Smart Recovery, and In The Rooms.
• The need for social distancing may make it difficult to see symptoms of depression in others. With social isolation, the in-person opportunities that we usually have to notice that friends, family, and colleagues may be struggling with a problem are no longer there. One way to think about it is that child abuse or intimate partner violence is missed more often in winter because long clothes cover bruises. Conduct regular "check ins" with your network and stay attuned to symptoms of depression, such as persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, or changes in sleep and weight.

Conclusion  Remember that the emotions you may be experiencing are normal reactions to difficult circumstances. Accept that things are different right now and everyone is adjusting. Prioritize what is most important and know that it is okay to let some things go right now. Be kind to yourself and others. Try to stay positive and use this time to try things you have been putting off, such as learning a new skill, or getting in touch with your creative side. This is an opportunity to connect with classmates in a different way.

D. Mental Health Resources FOR EMPLOYEES

A pandemic can cause high levels of stress, which will affect employees in different ways. Fear and anxiety can cause strong emotions that may exacerbate a pre-existing mental health condition and/or initiate new symptoms. It is important that employees take care of their mental health and have an awareness of any red flags that indicate a need for help.

For non-emergency counseling, contact a local health care provider. There are also national telehealth options available.

For a mental health care provider or substance abuse treatment:

- Employees who carry insurance through VCOM, can contact the Anthem Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for counseling options. [https://www.anthem.com/employer/eap/employee/](https://www.anthem.com/employer/eap/employee/)
  There is an online option (LiveHealth Online) for live therapy via smartphone, tablet or computer in order to get expert advice, a treatment plan, and medication, if needed.
- Employees can also contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment](http://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment) 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

On-Campus Resources

- While VCOM’s on-campus Mental Health Counselors do not provide counseling services to employees, employees may seek the advice of these counselors as to employee’s next steps in dealing with their mental health issue and/or provide referrals and resources.
  - Carolinas Campus: Natalie M. Fadel, PsyD nfadel@carolinas.vcom.edu 864-327-On9875
  - Virginia Campus: Edward Magalhaes, PhD, LPC emagalhaes@vt.vcom.edu 540-231-1944
  - Auburn Campus: Mary A. Taylor, PhD, MS mtaylor@auburn.vcom.edu 334.442.4037
  - Louisiana Campus: David Boyle, PhD, LPC dboyle@ulm.vcom.edu 318.342.7100

For an immediate crisis:

- Call 911
- Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. [https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline)
  Provides immediate crisis counseling to people affected by natural or human caused disasters.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org), or Lifeline Crisis Chat to connect with a counselor via web chat. [https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 if you are in a crisis. Provides 24/7 mental health support via text message. [www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

The CDC and the School of Public Health from John’s Hopkins have created some tips on how individuals can protect their mental health during these trying times, while also following guidelines set by health authorities to protect our physical health. VCOM has read and also recommends these tips as guidelines for VCOM employees:
How to cope with work-related stress and build resilience during a pandemic

Whether you are going into work or working from home, the COVID-19 pandemic has probably changed the way you work. Fear and anxiety about this new disease and other strong emotions can be overwhelming, and workplace stress can lead to burnout. How you cope with these emotions and stress can affect your well-being, the well-being of the people you care about, your workplace, and your community. During this pandemic, it is critical that you recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and manage job stress, and know where to go if you need help.

Know the signs and symptoms of stress:

- Feeling anger, irritation, or in denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous, or anxious
- Lacking motivation
- Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having trouble concentrating

Know the common work-related factors that can add to stress during a pandemic:

- Concern about the risk of being exposed to the virus at work
- Taking care of personal and family needs while working
- Managing a different workload
- Lack of access to the tools and equipment needed to perform your job
- Feelings that you are not contributing enough to work or guilt about not being on the frontline
- Uncertainty about the future of your workplace and/or employment
- Learning new communication tools and dealing with technical difficulties
- Adapting to a different workspace and/or work schedule

Follow these tips to build resilience and manage job stress:

- Communicate with your coworkers, supervisors, and employees about job stress while maintaining social distancing (at least 6 feet).
- Identify things that cause stress and work together to identify solutions.
- Talk openly with your supervisor and colleagues about how the pandemic is affecting work. Expectations should be communicated clearly by everyone.
- Ask about how to access mental health resources in your workplace.
- Identify those things, which you do not have control over and do the best you can with the resources available to you.
• Increase your sense of control by developing a consistent daily routine when possible — ideally one that is similar to your schedule before the pandemic.
  o Keep a regular sleep schedule.
  o Take breaks from work to stretch, exercise, or check in with your supportive colleagues, coworkers, family, and friends.
  o Spend time outdoors, either being physically active or relaxing.
  o If you work from home, set a regular time to end your work for the day, if possible.
  o Practice mindfulness techniques. www.mindful.org
  o Do things you enjoy during non-work hours.

• Know the facts about COVID-19. Be informed about how to protect yourself and others. Understanding the risk and sharing accurate information with people you care about can reduce stress and help you make a connection with others.

• Remind yourself that each of us has a crucial role in fighting this pandemic.
• Remind yourself that everyone is in an unusual situation with limited resources.
• Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and mentally exhausting.

• Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns, how you are feeling, or how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting you.
  o Connect with others through phone calls, email, text messages, mailing letters or cards, video chat, and social media.
  o Check on others. Helping others improves your sense of control, belonging, and self-esteem. Look for safe ways to offer social support to others, especially if they are showing signs of stress, such as depression and anxiety.
  o Crises offer a time for community cohesion and social solidarity. Science has repeatedly shown that volunteering can improve mental health. Check out this article for a list of organizations to donate to and this article for other ways to help your neighbors and community. You can also get involved with VCOM outreach opportunities.
  o If you have children, talk to them honestly about what is going on in an age-appropriate manner. Help kids express their feelings in a positive way, whether playing in the backyard, drawing, or journaling. Check out these guides by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Child Mind Institute, or National Association of School Psychologists for tips on how to talk to your kids about coronavirus.

• If you feel you may be misusing alcohol or other drugs (including prescription drugs) as a means of coping, reach out for help.
• If you are being treated for a mental health condition, continue with your treatment and be aware of any new or worsening symptoms.

Maintain your physical health
• Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep most nights. Good quality, sufficient sleep not only helps to support your immune system but also helps you to better manage stress and regulate emotions. [See recommendations by the National Sleep Foundation.]
• Try to eat at regular times and opt for nutritious foods whenever possible. Some people may crave junk food or sugary snacks and be tempted to snack mindlessly when stressed or bored, and others may skip meals altogether.
• Maintain an exercise routine, even if you cannot go to the gym. Exercise at home using an online workout video, or go for a walk, run, or bike ride. Getting outside can also help to calm and reset your mind.

Take care of your spirit

• Find a place of worship that is streaming or recording services. If prayer is an important part of your life, make time for it. Stay connected to your church community through phone calls, emails, and video chats.
• Try meditation, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or another mindfulness or relaxation technique. Check out YouTube or phone apps such as Calm or Headspace for guided meditation exercises. Consider enlisting friends and family and practicing meditation together at least once a day. Mindfulness can help lower blood pressure, reduce stress, support your immune system, and protect brain health.

Continue or seek out mental health treatment

• If you are currently in mental health treatment, continue with your current plan if possible, being mindful of approaches to minimize contact with others. Consider reaching out to a mental health professional even if you have not before. Make sure you have ongoing access to any medications you need.
• Ask about video therapy or phone call appointments. Most states have already made emergency exemptions to insurance coverage for telehealth. Regulations have been temporarily relaxed to allow even non-medical software like Skype, FaceTime, and Zoom to be used for telehealth. Contact your provider to ask about remote services.
• Avoid drugs and alcohol, particularly if you have a pre-existing mental health or substance use disorder. Check out online support groups and meetings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Smart Recovery, and In The Rooms.
• The need for social distancing may make it difficult to see symptoms of depression in others. With social isolation, the in-person opportunities that we usually have to notice that friends, family, and colleagues may be struggling with a problem are no longer there. One way to think about it is that child abuse or intimate partner violence is missed more often in winter because long clothes cover bruises. Conduct regular "check-ins" with your network and stay attuned to symptoms of depression, such as persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, or changes in sleep and weight.

Conclusion

Remember that the emotions you may be experiencing are normal reactions to difficult circumstances. Accept that things are different right now and everyone is adjusting. Prioritize what is most important and know that it is okay to let some things go right now.
Be kind to yourself and others. Try to stay positive and use this time try things you have been putting off, such as learning a new skill, getting in touch with your creative side, or starting that project at work that has been on the back burner.

It can be hard to think past what is going on today, let alone in a week or in six months, but give yourself permission to daydream about the future and what is on the horizon. Remember that this is temporary, and things will return to normal.


E. AVOIDING SOCIAL STIGMA RELATED TO COVID-19 FOR EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

WHAT IS SOCIAL STIGMA?

Social stigma in the context of health is the negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics and a specific disease. In an outbreak, this may mean people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated separately, and/or experience loss of status because of a perceived link with a disease.

Such treatment can negatively affect those with the disease, as well as their caregivers, family, friends and communities. People who don’t have the disease but share other characteristics with this group may also suffer from stigma.

The current COVID-19 outbreak has provoked social stigma and discriminatory behaviors against people of certain ethnic backgrounds as well as anyone perceived to have been in contact with the virus.

WHY IS COVID-19 CAUSING SO MUCH STIGMA?

The level of stigma associated with COVID-19 is based on three main factors: 1) it is a disease that is new and for which there are still many unknowns; 2) we are often afraid of the unknown; and 3) it is easy to associate that fear with ‘others’.

It is understandable that there is confusion, anxiety, and fear among the public. Unfortunately, these factors are also fueling harmful stereotypes.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

Stigma can undermine social cohesion and prompt possible social isolation of groups, which might contribute to a situation where the virus is more, not less, likely to spread. This can result in more severe health problems and difficulties controlling a disease outbreak.

Stigma can: • Drive people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination • Prevent people from seeking health care immediately • Discourage them from adopting healthy behaviors

HOW TO ADDRESS SOCIAL STIGMA
Evidence clearly shows that stigma and fear around communicable diseases hamper the response. What works is building trust in reliable health services and advice, showing empathy with those affected, understanding the disease itself, and adopting effective, practical measures so people can help keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

How we communicate about COVID-19 is critical in supporting people to take effective action to help combat the disease and to avoid fueling fear and stigma. An environment needs to be created in which the disease and its impact can be discussed and addressed openly, honestly and effectively.

Here are some tips on how to address and avoid compounding, social stigma:

1. Words matter: dos and don’ts when talking about the new coronavirus (COVID-19)
2. Do your part: simple ideas to drive stigma away
3. Communication tips and messages.

**WORDS MATTER:**

When talking about coronavirus disease, certain words (i.e. suspect case, isolation...) and language may have a negative meaning for people and fuel stigmatizing attitudes. They can perpetuate existing negative stereotypes or assumptions, strengthen false associations between the disease and other factors, create widespread fear, or dehumanize those who have the disease.

This can drive people away from getting screened, tested and quarantined. We recommend a ‘people first’ language that respects and empowers people in all communication channels, including the media. Words used in media are especially important, because these will shape the popular language and communication on the new coronavirus (COVID-19). Negative reporting has the potential to influence how people suspected to have the new coronavirus (COVID-19), patients and their families and affected communities are perceived and treated.

There are many concrete examples of how the use of inclusive language and less stigmatizing terminology can help to in control epidemics and pandemics from the HIV, TB and H1N1 Flu.

**DOS and DON'TS**

Below are some dos and don'ts on language when talking about the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19): DO - talk about the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Don’t - attach locations or ethnicity to the disease, this is not a “Wuhan Virus”, “Chinese Virus” or “Asian Virus”.

The official name for the disease was deliberately chosen to avoid stigmatization - the “co” stands for Corona, “vi” for virus and “d” for disease, 19 is because the disease emerged in 2019.

DO - talk about “people who have COVID-19”, “people who are being treated for COVID-19”, “people who are recovering from COVID-19” or “people who died after contracting COVID19” Don’t - refer to people with the disease as “COVID-19 cases” or “victims”

DO - talk about “people who may have COVID-19” or “people who are presumptive for COVID-19” Don’t - talk about “COVID-19 suspects” or “suspected cases”.
DO - talk about people “acquiring” or “contracting” COVID-19. Don’t talk about people “transmitting COVID-19” “infecting others” or “spreading the virus” as it implies intentional transmission and assigns blame. Using criminalizing or dehumanizing terminology creates the impression that those with the disease have somehow done something wrong or are less human than the rest of us, feeding stigma, undermining empathy, and potentially fueling wider reluctance to seek treatment or attend screening, testing and quarantine.

DO - speak accurately about the risk from COVID-19, based on scientific data and latest official health advice. Don’t - repeat or share unconfirmed rumors, and avoid using hyperbolic language designed to generate fear like “plague”, “apocalypse” etc.

DO - talk positively and emphasize the effectiveness of prevention and treatment measures. For most people this is a disease they can overcome. There are simple steps we can all take to keep ourselves, our loved ones and the most vulnerable safe. Don’t - emphasize or dwell on the negative, or messages of threat. We need to work together to help keep those who are most vulnerable safe.

DO - emphasize the effectiveness of adopting protective measures to prevent acquiring the new coronavirus, as well as early screening, testing and treatment.

DO YOUR PART: FIRST UNLESS CONTRAINDICATED – BE VACCINATED AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME

Governments, citizens, media, key influencers and communities have an important role to play in preventing and stopping stigma surrounding people from China and Asia in general. We all need to be intentional and thoughtful when communicating on social media and other communication platforms, showing supportive behaviors around the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Here are some examples and tips on possible actions to counter stigmatizing attitudes:

• Spreading the facts: Stigma can be heightened by insufficient knowledge about how the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is transmitted and treated, and how to prevent infection. In response, prioritize the collection, consolidation and dissemination of accurate country- and community-specific information about affected areas, individual and group vulnerability to COVID-19, treatment options and where to access health care and information. Use simple language and

• Amplify the voices, stories and images of local people who have experienced the new coronavirus (COVID-19) and have recovered or who have supported a loved one through recovery to emphasize that most people do recover from COVID-19. Also, implementing a “hero” campaign honoring caretakers and healthcare workers plays a great role in reducing stigma in communities.

• Make sure you portray different ethnic groups. All materials should show diverse communities being impacted and working together to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Ensure that typeface, symbols and formats are neutral and don’t suggest any particular group.

• Ethical journalism: Journalistic reporting which overly focuses on individual behavior and patients’ responsibility for having and “spreading COVID-19” can increase stigma of people who may have the disease. Some media outlets have, for example, focused on speculating on the source of COVID-19, trying to identify “patient zero” in each country. Emphasizing efforts to find a vaccine and treatment can increase fear and give the impression that we are powerless to halt infections now. Instead, promote
content around basic infection prevention practices, symptoms of COVID-19 and when to seek health care.

COMMUNICATION TIPS and MESSAGES: Facts, not fear will stop the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) - Share facts and accurate information about the disease. - Challenge myths and stereotypes. - Choose words carefully. The way we communicate can affect the attitudes of others (see do’s and don’ts above).

BE SURE TO ENCOURAGE FACTS ABOUT COVID-19 AND ABOUT VACCINATION. THIS CAN BEST BE DONE BY FOLLOWING CDC GUIDELINES AND THOSE GUIDELINES SET BY THE STATE. AVOID MEDIA’S DAILY STORIES.