



Helena College Cares

Healthy Practices for a Healthy Campus

Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the global health crisis created by the emergence of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. The Commissioner of Higher Education for Montana directed all campuses to move to remote instruction for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester and formed the Healthy MUS Taskforce. This taskforce drafted recommendations for healthy return to campus guidelines that were approved by the Commissioner and the Montana Board of Regents. All campuses, including Helena College, were directed to create comprehensive, campus-specific health and safety guidelines for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Helena College formed a team of key members of our campus community to develop the Helena College Cares – Healthy Return to Campus guidelines which was published in August 2020 and revised in January 2021.

As COVID-19 infection rates have decreased and vaccination rates have increased, on May 14, 2021 the Commissioner of Higher Education officially retired the 2020-2021 Healthy MUS Guidelines with the following recommendations for all campuses to incorporate as appropriate.

Healthy MUS Guidance for all Campuses

Mask Requirement. There is no longer a system-level mask requirement for the Montana University System. Campuses should consult relevant authorities and guidance at the local, state, and federal levels when developing any ongoing guidance related to masks.

COVID-19 Testing. Campuses will, on their own or with state and local health care providers, ensure that symptomatic individuals have continued access to COVID-19 testing. Campuses will support local public health authorities if and when contact tracing is necessary.

Quarantine & Isolation Housing. If and when necessary, campuses will make accommodations available for students living on campus who require isolation or quarantine housing due to COVID-19 exposure.

International Travel. When considering approval of MUS-affiliated travel, campuses will rely upon travel guidance from federal public health agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). International travel to CDC “Level 4” countries remains prohibited. Travel to CDC “Level 3” countries is strongly discouraged and may only be approved through petition and after approval by a campus travel review committee and cabinet level leadership. At a minimum, the travel review process needs to include requirements for enhanced pre-departure health and safety training, risk management planning, and contingency planning in case changing conditions require trip cancellation, or significant modification. Individuals returning to, or visiting, MUS campuses from international destinations should follow relevant CDC guidance related to COVID-19 testing after travel and self-monitoring for symptoms.

Event hosting. Campuses will consult and coordinate with local public health authorities when planning and hosting large events.

Vaccines. Campuses will continue to raise awareness about the importance of our COVID-19 vaccination effort and promote access to COVID-19 vaccines, including the use of incentive programs and/or vaccination events when practical.

Helena College Practices

To meet the MUS recommendations where applicable, and ensure the continued health and safety of our campus community, our Healthy Helena College plan for the 2021-2022 year:

- Retired the Helena College Cares – Healthy Return to Campus plan that had been in effect for the 2020-2021 academic year

- Worked with the Lewis & Clark County Public Health Department to determine essential elements of plan for 2021-2022 academic year
- Formed work groups to establish processes for academics, human resources, and event management

Basic Assumptions

1. Helena College will continue to monitor the Centers for Disease Control guidance and work with the Lewis & Clark County Public Health Department to ensure our safety protocols are in line with current medical guidance.
2. Recommendations for use of face coverings for both vaccinated and non-vaccinated people are based on current COVID-19 transmission levels in each county. Helena College will continue to monitor conditions in Lewis & Clark County and provide information on current recommendations to our campus community. The CDC recommends face coverings for non-vaccinated people, irrespective of the current transmission levels.
3. We will continue to work with the Lewis & Clark County Public Health Department to provide information about and access to COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.
4. All members of our community should perform a daily self-check and should not come to campus if they answer yes to any of the questions. More specific information for both students and employees is provided later in this document.
5. Helena College will maintain practices that allow for contact tracing by the Lewis & Clark County Public Health Department.
6. All employees traveling as a representative of Helena College will submit a COVID safety plan. International travel as part of College business will not be considered for the 2021-2022 year.

Academic Considerations:

1. Students who are not feeling well should be discouraged from attending a class in person.
2. The Modified Student Absence Policy will continue for the Fall 2021 semester.
3. Faculty will distribute course content that is informative and accessible for students, whether they are participating in-person, virtually, or online.
 - a. Students who are required to quarantine, or do not want to come to school because they are in a high-risk group should not have to wait to make up course work. They should have access to the course and be able to complete the course in real time, if possible.
4. Students who are absent due to illness will be given opportunities to access course materials online. If a student wishes to seek reasonable American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations, they should contact the Disability Resources Coordinator (disabilityresources@helenacollege.edu) to initiate a review.
5. Faculty will take attendance and maintain a seating chart in all in-person / hybrid classes to facilitate contact tracing, as necessary. Attendance will be recorded in Starfish to allow administration access to records as required for reporting to public health officials (In Starfish: in-person attendance will be marked as present; virtual attendance will be marked as excused). If faculty are grading student attendance, they are recommended to take the attendance in Moodle as well (this is only for instructor's own record; not for the tracing purposes).
6. Field trips, internships, clinical experiences: Students and faculty should follow guidance and recommendations when visiting another location for instructional purposes.
7. Students should be able to submit course work remotely, when possible. Faculty should practice working with and develop a plan for digital assignment submission. The "Teaching Remotely Guide" lists all the technologies instructors can use for teaching remotely and provides examples of in-person class sessions converted to online sessions.

8. Faculty are asked to consider recording face-to-face lectures for students who are not able to attend class due to illness.

Human Resource Considerations:

1. Employees should continue to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 symptoms each morning. Those with any symptoms should stay home and contact their supervisor for guidance. The supervisor will follow the Helena College Telecommuting Procedure, Section E (4) to determine whether working from home is appropriate or if sick leave should be used.
2. Employees will continue to track those people with whom they are in contact (6 feet or closer) for more than 15 minutes each day. This is required in order to provide information to the Lewis and Clark County Health Department when necessary for contact tracing.
3. All employees traveling on College business will be required to submit a travel safety plan. The form is located on the Business Services webpage and should be submitted with request authorization to travel (RAT) form prior to travel.

Event Considerations:

1. All events must be in compliance with local public health guidelines.
2. All events (including meetings) must go through an approval process which includes submitting a room reservation request through the online EMS system. Once a reservation request is submitted, the event organizer will be notified if the event has been approved.
3. Events taking place off campus must follow health and safety guidelines for the venue they are using, as well as local public health guidelines.
4. Event organizers are responsible for taking and maintaining attendance records and seating charts (if applicable) for their event for contact tracing purposes, as recommended by the local county health department.
 - a. This is also required for events where a room reservation is not needed (off-campus and outdoor events).