

# **Update #5 to the Higher Education Report: Recommendations for Reopening Undergraduate Colleges and Universities**

## **Questions on Reopening Guidance**

### **Issued by Mark Ojakian, State Lead for Reopening Higher Education**

#### **June 11, 2020**

The information below has been gathered from state agency partners and others to address questions raised by the colleges and universities related to reopening plans.

1. A question has been raised on how many dorm rooms are needed to be held aside for containment. Staff from the Department of Public Health suggest that schools consider reserving 10% of their rooms for containment, but that will be dependent on many other factors. For example, as the committee has already determined in their guidelines, if a student lives in a suite situation and has daily close living contact with suitemates, they would be considered a "family unit". In that case, by the time one of the suitemates was symptomatic and had testing that revealed their COVID+ status, they could have been spreading virus for a week or so among the unit members. In that case, it is likely that the recommendation would be to isolate (in another location) the COVID+ individual and then quarantine the other suite-mates in place to see if their symptom status changes and isolate as necessary. Similarly, for individuals in a typical congregate dormitory setting where 2 individuals occupy a single room on a floor with many rooms, you may need to isolate (in another location) the COVID+ student and quarantine the roommate in place if they are asymptomatic and COVID- to see if they develop symptoms, or isolate (in another location) both roommates if they both show symptoms. So, in making a decision on each campus about how many rooms to reserve for COVID+ student isolation, you should consider the layout of housing for each campus, the % in suites vs. congregate dorms, etc., and use that information to determine the number of rooms you would need to leave vacant for future quarantine and isolation. The 10% estimate may be too high, but it is probably not too low.
2. A second question asked for clarity on the bathroom guidance which called for disinfectant wipes to be placed next to toilet, shower stalls, and sinks and whether an alternative might satisfy the protocol. DPH staff suggest that while disinfectant wipes are a convenient way for individuals to wipe down a bathroom surface (like a sink) after use, there are certainly supply chain considerations and potential "waste volume" management considerations. Luckily, this virus is relatively easy to kill, and that can be accomplished in most cases with normal detergent-based cleaning products and physical wiping of surfaces. In cases where physical wiping down of surfaces is not likely (i.e. where many students are utilizing a central bathroom facility and are unlikely to take time to clean surfaces well), providing a 10% bleach solution OR a quaternary ammonium-based disinfectant (which is probably already part of your custodial ordering supply chain) in a spray bottle near the sinks, toilet stalls, and showers will allow students to "spray and leave" a disinfectant on the surfaces they use. [Note: use 10% bleach OR quaternary ammonium

disinfectants. It is suggested that schools commit to having one or the other campus-wide because mixing those two compounds could be extremely hazardous.] Procedures for this type of scenario can be developed and posted in the restrooms to remind students to utilize the disinfectant spray, to instruct them on how to use the disinfectant, and how to avoid cross-contamination during the process. For example, when a student uses a sink, they can be instructed to 1) turn on the water, 2) spray the surface of the sink with the disinfectant, 3) wash their hands thoroughly, 4) use a paper towel to dry their hands and then 5) use that paper towel to turn off the water. These are simple instructions that lay out a routine for students that they will adapt to very quickly and give them a sense of security about the cleanliness of the space. The only financial investment is in ordering more bottles of whatever your custodial staff already use as a disinfectant and a bunch of additional spray bottles, properly labeled as disinfectant. This solution can be used for classrooms and other high contact areas as well.

3. Another question was raised about protocols for operating campus transportation to reduce interaction between the drivers and riders and well as between riders. Guidance from the Department of Transportation on how they are operating public buses is provided below.
  - Where possible only allow rear door boarding except in the case where a rider needs access to a ramp.
  - Riders must wear a mask unless they have medical reason not to.
  - Seats are marked for social distancing.
  - Driver barriers are installed.
  - On smaller vehicles, consider installing sneeze guards between rows of seats.
  - Where possible, increase service in order to reduce the potential for crowding.
  - Drivers should monitor passenger loads and pass by stops if they can't take more passengers.
  - High touch surfaces should be cleaned twice a day and more intense cleaning once a day.
  
4. Finally, questions still remain about athletics. The NCAA has released guidance but will leave it to conferences and schools to determine whether the athletes will compete.  
<http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/core-principles-resocialization-collegiate-sport>  
Should a school decide to bring athletes back before August 24, there is a window of opportunity in Phase 2 where you can pilot with small scale group of residential students. These students must be tested and quarantined until results are available. Schools must complete the Phase 2 template and submit to DPH and Mark Ojakian before the start of the pilot.