

COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines Implemented at Palomar College October 14, 2020

Due to the impact of COVID-19 in the State of California, Governor Newsom issued a state of emergency on March 4, 2020. On March 5, the Palomar College Emergency Operations Center (EOC) held its first meeting to begin to address the needs of the College during the State of Emergency. Typically, a state of emergency is finite. However, the length of this state of emergency is unprecedented and to date, there is no end determined at this time.

Since March 5 and to this day, Palomar College has proactively aligned its onsite and offsite operations with guidelines published by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), [California Department of Public Health](#), [San Diego County Department of Public Health](#), and the [Chancellor's Office](#).

Through the EOC and EOC Policy team, the College continues to respond accordingly as guidelines change and updates are published.

The very basic guidelines to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, as issued by federal, state and local government agencies, are ones that we have communicated regularly from the very beginning of this pandemic, and it is expected that all students and employees adhere to the following:

- Maintain at least 6 feet of distance between you and another person – especially if they do not live in your household.
- Wear a facial covering at all times when you leave your home
- Wash your hands frequently and avoid touching your face
- Avoid large gatherings
- Stay home if you are sick

The EOC has established a multitude of tools to respond to the needs of employees as we continue to work in our remote environment. There are effective processes for [30-minute visits](#) to campus to retrieve work related items; [appointment setting](#) to gain assistance and equipment from Information Services, and a return to work/distribution event plan to serve the needs of instruction and operations. The latter is being refined and improved and will be available by October 16.

During Summer 2020, our COVID-19 Response Action Team (CRAT) was designed as part of the EOC to establish temperature and symptom screening protocols to protect the health of students and employees coming to campus. The screening stations are representative of the College's proactive approach to mitigating the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Recommendations and guidelines regarding the importance of screening students and employees can be found in the following sources: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidance for Businesses](#), [California Department of Public Health](#), and the [Chancellor's Office](#). Initially planned as a pilot, the screening stations now represent the College's preparedness for a more robust schedule of onsite course delivery as is planned for the Spring 2021 semester.

The CRAT also researched and implemented a Risk Management Matrix to help evaluate the risks presented by students and employees reporting an exposure to COVID-19 via the [reporting form](#) on the [COVID-19 website](#). To date, the team has interacted with about 75 individuals who have reported their

exposure or positive test results. It is through the detailed intake process that we are able to provide the established CDC guidelines for self-isolation, self-quarantine, and self-monitoring to all impacted individuals. The lowest risk cases are asked to self-quarantine or to self-monitor for symptoms. These recommendations are based on the degree of exposure reported. The highest risk cases, those that report positive test results or a first-degree exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual, are asked to self-isolate, seek medical attention and not return to work or class for a specified amount of time.

Time away from work or class is dependent upon case details. Employees are also provided detailed information regarding the Families First Coronavirus Response Act [FFCRA](#), an employer paid leave program established by the federal government in early 2020. Thankfully, due to the implementation of the reporting form and the dedicated time and talent of the CRAT, the College has been able to minimize the spread of the coronavirus by managing the less than 25 reported high-risk cases. Five of the high-risk cases were due to positive COVID-19 test results.

With the establishment of the [COVID-19 Risk Evaluation Matrix](#), the EOC Policy team determined the need to create a threshold. As defined, a threshold that requires an immediate meeting of the EOC Policy team occurs when there are three high-risk cases in one program area of the college. It is during this meeting that the EOC Policy team determines the next step(s) in securing the health and safety of students and employees. Steps taken to date include the temporary pause of a program. In addition, the District reserves the right to temporarily modify policies and practices during this declared California State of Emergency as per Article 7.3 of both the PFF and CCE Collective Bargaining Agreements.

More recently, the California Public Health Department issued [the Employer Playbook for safe reopening](#). The EOC will be using this resource to update the College's [COVID-19 Recovery Plan](#) that was finalized this past June.