COVID-19 RESPONSE

CHARTING OUR COURSE

OUR RETURN-TO-CAMPUS PLAN

Updated August 2020
To our True Blue community,

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting health emergency, Middle Tennessee State University put into motion a plan in March 2020 that addressed mission-critical services and operations while working to protect the health and welfare of campus constituents. This COVID-19 Response Plan guided our successful remote delivery of instruction to students for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester, while maintaining limited on-campus activities, services, and operations deemed essential.

This return-to-work document builds upon the elements of our COVID-19 Response Plan. It outlines a three-phase approach to responsibly transition the University back to full academic and operational service levels while managing the risk to our employees and students. It is intended to provide information to aid the campus community for the gradual return of employees and be a resource for students and employees seeking answers to changes to campus operations made necessary because of the pandemic.

**There are four priorities for this return-to-campus plan:**

- Working to protect the campus community’s health and welfare, which includes students, faculty, and staff as well as stakeholders, business partners, and visitors. Given that the spread of COVID-19 is primarily person-to-person, this objective will require the proper participation and cooperation of everyone, on an individual basis, in addition to the University’s programmatic efforts.

- Monitoring the appropriate health and emergency organizations for information, guidance, and directives. These organizations include, but are not limited to: (1) U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); (2) World Health Organization (WHO); (3) Tennessee Department of Health (TDNOH); (4) Rutherford County Department of Health (RCDOH); (5) Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA); and (6) Rutherford County Emergency Management Agency (RCEMA).

- Monitoring the appropriate University governing agencies and other organizations for information, guidance, directives, and program implications. These organizations include, but are not limited to, (1) appropriate federal agencies; (2) state of Tennessee; (3) MTSU Board of Trustees; (4) Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC); (5) National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA); and (6) Conference USA (C-USA).

- Communicating consistently and effectively with the campus community regarding all decisions, directives, guidance, actions, and requirements associated with the elements of this plan.

Guidance and requirements contained in this plan are subject to change and will be likely updated prior to future phases of re-entry and as we approach our return to in-person instruction. For our employees: When in doubt, reach out to your supervisor for guidance. Also, for the latest updates and information, visit [mtsu.edu/coronavirus](https://mtsu.edu/coronavirus).

Sincerely,

Sidney A. McPhee
President
Sidney.McPhee@mtsu.edu

On June 16, MTSU began Phase 1 of a gradual, phased approach with some groups/functions returning to campus before others and, on July 14, we entered Phase 2 of our return efforts. However, several employees and functions of the University remain reduced—and many employees are working remotely—as we continue to monitor state and area health trends before increasing the size of our staffing footprint on campus. We will update [mtsu.edu/coronavirus](https://mtsu.edu/coronavirus) every Friday afternoon to share with our community some of the key COVID-19 metrics that drive the decisions of our leadership team.
MTSU COVID DIRECTIVE FOR EMPLOYEE SCREENING AND STAYING/GOING HOME

04 PHASED STAFFING RETURN TO CAMPUS

06 EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF EMPLOYEES AND SUPERVISORS

10 WHO TO CONTACT FOR ASSISTANCE

11 DECISION POINTS AND INDICATORS

14 ONGOING CLEANING

16 MTSU COVID DIRECTIVE FOR EMPLOYEE SCREENING AND STAYING/GOING HOME
MTSU is in the process of its return to campus. Our plan has three phases over time, a coordinated process to ensure appropriate social distancing, availability of personal protective equipment, and adequate testing capabilities for COVID-19.

These decisions will be made at the unit levels, approved by the appropriate division vice president or the provost, based on mission-critical operations, ability to control and manage specific work environments, and necessity to access on-site resources.

The need to reduce the number of people on campus (density) to meet social distancing requirements will continue for some time. Support units that can continue to effectively work remotely will likely continue to do so.

As staffing and learning on-site increases and operations expand, leadership will closely monitor and assess the potential spread of the virus, as well as procedures and policies to mitigate it.

**OUR THREE PHASES**

President McPhee in March directed supervisors to reduce our employee footprint as a safety precaution. This included remote instruction, reduction of services on campus, reduced operations, remote work, and paid leave for employees whose work could not be done remotely. These actions were consistent with the Tennessee Governor’s Executive Orders 22, 23, and 30.

On **June 16, 2020**, we entered the first of three phases to return to work:

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### Phase 1—Restoring On-Campus Services/Campus Partially Occupied:

- Supervisors worked with the provost and division vice presidents to designate certain employees to begin ramping up operations in preparation for the Fall 2020 semester. Services and functions were prioritized and employee returns have been tailored to specific needs.

- In appropriate circumstances, employees continue to work remotely or in hybrid work arrangements following the process in Policy 813 Alternate Work Arrangements. Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Extended Family Medical Leave as provided under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act may be used for specified reasons (see Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness). Employees not eligible for this leave may use their available annual and sick leave pursuant to Policy 825 Leave.

- Employees who exhausted all leave options may be allowed to take unpaid leave. Pursuant to Policy 825 Leave, Section V. Leave of Absence, employees may be allowed to be in a leave without pay status due to reasons of illness, injury, or disability for up to one year. Appropriate medical documentation will be required to approve such requests.

- This phase is consistent with the Tennessee Governor’s Executive Order 30 and the Tennessee Pledge (Higher Education).

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On **July 14, 2020**, we entered the second of three phases to return to work:

**Phase 2—Increasing On-Campus Services and Campus Employee Footprint:**

- Supervisors worked with the provost and division vice presidents to increase on-campus services and campus employee footprint.

- In appropriate circumstances, employees continue to work remotely or in hybrid work arrangements following the process in Policy 813 Alternate Work Arrangements. Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Extended Family Medical Leave as provided under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act may be used for specified reasons (see Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness). Employees not eligible for this leave may use their available annual and sick leave pursuant to Policy 825 Leave.

- Employees who exhausted all leave options may be allowed to take unpaid leave. Pursuant to Policy 825 Leave, Section V. Leave of Absence, employees may be allowed to be in a leave without pay status due to reasons of illness, injury, or disability for up to one year. Appropriate medical documentation will be required to approve such requests.

On **August 3, 2020**, we will enter the final phase to return to work:

**Phase 3—Full Services:**

- This includes the resumption of on-campus instruction as prescribed, full services as required, and moving toward full operations.

- This phase will be informed by guidance from health professionals and in compliance with guidelines and directives of federal and state governing agencies.

The movement between these phases is dependent on the outcomes seen as restrictions are lifted. If outbreak numbers begin to increase and/or peak, it may be necessary to adjust these phases, or revert to previous phases, until the situation is under control.

The three phases of reopening require **health monitoring, social distancing, staffing and work schedule options**, hygiene practices, administrative procedures, and technical innovation. Together they will help ensure that the reopening is done as safely and as efficiently as possible and in keeping with our True Blue spirit.
Because the health and safety of the campus community is of paramount concern, all employees are required to comply with the following expectations and requirements. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Before returning back to campus all employees must complete the online Return to Work Agreement through PipelineMT. Employees are certifying that they will abide by the following:

• Follow all expectations/requirements before returning to work, including, but not limited to:
  o Confirming health and providing appropriate screening information upon arrival at work as required by your supervisor
  o Participating in health screening confirmation procedures, such as temperature taking, as required by your supervisor
• Complete a self-assessment prior to coming to work each day.
• Read Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness as well as Charting our Course: Our Return-to-Campus Plan.

Employees are strongly encouraged to complete online training before returning to work. This training will be provided to employees by email through the University’s training software vendor. Employees are required to monitor personal health daily and participate in appropriate health screening procedures. On a daily basis before reporting to work, employees are required to self-assess and monitor their health by asking the following questions:

• Have I been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
• Do I have any of the symptoms listed below that are unrelated to any other condition (such as allergies)?
  □ Fever over 100.4°
  □ Chills
  □ Cough
  □ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  □ Fatigue
  □ Muscle or body aches
  □ Headache
  □ Sore throat
  □ New loss of taste or smell
  □ Congestion or runny nose
  □ Nausea or vomiting
  □ Diarrhea
  □ Other symptoms as updated by the CDC

As employees physically return to work, emphasis will be placed on protecting their health and welfare along with all members of the campus community to the extent possible.

Because the spread of COVID-19 is primarily person-to-person, the University community must fully engage in proactive measures. Supervisors will play a key role in promoting the success of the University’s plan as we move from phase to phase of reopening. The guidelines below provide the expectations and requirements of University employees and supervisors as employees return to work.

Facility managers and department heads will be responsible for managing the University’s social distancing guidelines along with other necessary social distancing criteria for access to their specific areas (i.e. James E. Walker Library; Campus Recreation; Student Union facilities; dining venues; athletic facilities, etc.). Consistency should be a goal, but may not always be possible.

All campus departments must look for ways to continue to provide high-quality student support services, both remotely (for those who cannot come to campus) and in person (while maintaining appropriate health safety standards).

The University will establish enhanced standards for cleaning and disinfecting the campus, as well as provide sufficient staff and supplies to maintain these standards.
If the employee is experiencing any of these symptoms and they are unrelated to any other condition (such as allergies) or if the employee has been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case, the employee is required to stay home; limit contact with others; contact their health care provider or seek other appropriate medical assistance as necessary; and report work/leave status to their supervisor.

If these symptoms are confirmed at work or develop while at work, employees are required to leave the premises immediately; limit contact with others; contact their health care provider or seek other appropriate medical assistance as necessary; and report their work/leave status to their supervisor along with information regarding contacts with others and areas visited on campus when symptoms began.

**PERSONAL HYGIENE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES**

Employees are required to wear face coverings or masks inside any campus building. This applies to all areas of campus and includes but is not limited to: classrooms, labs, offices, and common areas such as hallways, stairways, elevators, restrooms, and other shared spaces. Face coverings or masks are not required in a private office when one person occupies that office. They also are not required outdoors when social distancing is practiced.

Employees also are required to follow personal hygiene and protective measures, including but not limited to:

- Washing hands often
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth
- Coughing or sneezing into your face mask or elbow
- Using face masks and coverings and other PPE appropriately
- Cleaning and disinfecting work areas appropriately

Employees are required to practice social distancing:

- Maintain 6 feet from others as work duties permit
- Avoid gathering in groups for non-work activities
- Adhere to posted occupancy limits for spaces
- Avoid traveling in the same vehicle (follow distancing requirements when traveling together is necessary)
EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF DEPARTMENTS AND SUPERVISORS

Supervisors will communicate the requirements of the online health screening certification process, Return to Work agreement, and online training to employees. Supervisors will be responsible for ensuring that all employees have completed the online process and training before returning to work.

Employees must complete the online process prior to returning to work certifying:

- They will follow all expectations/requirements before returning to work.
- They will complete a self-assessment prior to coming to work each day.
- They have read Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness as well as Charting our Course: Our Return-to-Campus Plan.

Supervisors will implement the University’s mandated safety strategies that are tailored to specific operations. These tailored strategies should include:

- Face-covering protocols for employees
- Ensuring adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies by following purchasing procedures and supply management guidance from the Division of Business and Finance. These supplies include but are not limited to:
  - Face coverings
  - Hand sanitizer
  - Local cleaning/disinfecting products
  - Departmental non-touch thermometers

Supervisors will develop and implement administrative controls to include:

- Social distancing practices
- Continuation of video conferencing in place of in-person meetings
- Adjustments to physical office layouts
- Alternative travel arrangements (limited occupancy in University vehicles)

Supervisors will direct employees who have concerns related to returning to campus to the appropriate office as set out on page 10 below in the Who to Contact for Assistance section of this document.

Supervisors, working with the provost or their respective vice president, should consider adapting or altering operations to provide greater safety to the community. This includes but is not limited to:

- Allowing employees to continue working remotely or in hybrid work arrangements in appropriate circumstances following the process in Policy 813 Alternate Work Arrangement
- Evaluating whether changes in layout and design to create natural separation should take place
- Requiring visitors to their offices to make appointments to prevent gathering in waiting or reception areas
- Identifying and digitizing paper processes where possible and practical
- Using video- or audio-conference technology to limit gatherings
Supervisors will identify safety enhancements for areas with considerable person-to-person interactions (e.g., reception areas, advising, etc.). These enhancements could include but are not limited to:

- Protective barriers
- 6-foot spacing designation signage
- Additional signage (e.g., capacity, distancing, awareness) as required

Facilities Services and Campus Planning are providing input to Printing Services (Blue Print Solutions) on occupancy limits for public elevators and restrooms only.

General signage for hygiene, social distancing, etc., will be prepared by Blue Print Solutions and provided by the University.

- The design and content of University-purchased signs will be consistent throughout campus in order to provide visual cues for community members and spark appropriate responses.

- Supervisors should order tailored signage necessary for specific operations through Blue Print Solutions at mtsu.edu/blueprint.

Supervisors may screen or confirm daily self-assessment for all employees upon arrival to work within their department. All employees in the department should be subject to the same protocols.

Supervisors may take employee temperatures upon arrival to work with no-touch thermometers provided by the University. All employees in the department should be subject to the same protocols.

When employees notify their supervisors that they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID-19, or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, if the employee has not reported to work, the supervisor will direct the employee to stay home. If the employee is already at work, the supervisor will direct the employee to immediately leave the premises. In all cases, the employee should be directed to seek appropriate medical care.

We are in the process of developing an online portal for supervisors to immediately report symptomatic and positive cases. In the interim, please report these cases to Health Services using the following link: mtsu.edu/covidreporting.

Supervisors should not allow employees to return to work until they are notified by Human Resources Services that the employee is cleared to return.

**WHO TO CONTACT FOR ASSISTANCE**

**OVERALL COVID-19 QUESTIONS**

Questions not answered at mtsu.edu/coronavirus can be asked via a dedicated email and phone number overseen by Student Health Services Director Richard Chapman. Reach program staff at mtsucovid19@mtsu.edu or 615-396-WELL (9355) during 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Monday–Friday.

**WORKPLACE COVID-19 QUESTIONS**

Employees must follow return-to-work protocols and requirements; these will be provided to them by the Human Resources Office. Employees are not to return to work until they are cleared to do so by that office. Concerns related by employees on their return to campus should be directed to the appropriate office as specified below:

- ADA Compliance Office, Lance Alexis, director (lance.alexis@mtsu.edu or 615-898-2185): Contact this office concerning an employee’s medical condition that might impact the employee’s return to campus including being in a CDC-identified high-risk category for COVID-19.

- Human Resources Services, Kathy Musselman, assistant vice president (kathy.musselman@mtsu.edu or 615-898-2929): Contact this office for an employee’s non-medical condition that might impact the employee’s return to campus, or if the employee’s circumstances would allow them to benefit from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, either with Emergency Paid Sick Leave or Extended Family and Medical Leave.

- For more details about these programs, see Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness at mtsu.edu/policies/personnel/825-A.php
President McPhee, Provost Mark Byrnes, and our leadership team put forward many changes in our operations and practices to prepare for a return to on-campus and in-person operations for the Fall 2020 semester. Here is a summary of those key decision points.

**General campus operation:**

- Face coverings must be worn in all indoor areas (unless alone in a private office), and outdoors if physical distancing restrictions are not able to be maintained.
- Signage will provide instructions related to queuing, entry/exit, wearing of face coverings, occupancy, physical distancing, etc.
- Increased cleaning protocols are instituted for high-touch areas and multi-use areas (classrooms, dining halls, etc.).
- Special cleaning protocols are in place for areas that may have been contaminated by an active COVID case.

**Academic instruction:**

- 40% of courses are offered with some or all on-campus instruction; 40% of courses are offered as completely on-line instruction. Remaining classes include internships, student teaching, dissertation hours, research, independent study, etc.
- All classrooms have been reconfigured to meet social distancing guidelines. Traditional event spaces, including the Student Union Ballroom, are being repurposed for classroom instruction.
- Consistent attendance policy is established across all classes, with provisions for illness or isolation requirements.
- All classroom instruction may be captured via video technology for use by students who cannot come to class due to illness.

**On-campus housing:**

- All sleeping rooms are converted to private space.
- There will be assigned check-in times staggered over five days to reduce density in lobbies, hallways, elevators.
- 5% of total bed spaces is held for isolation/quarantine (100 beds).
- Visitation is restricted to one MTSU student guest per resident; non-student guests are restricted unless approved by staff.
Meal services:
- Tables and chairs removed to reach social distancing guidelines of 6 feet between tables
- No self-service or buffet-style options; all food will be served or pre-packaged
- Online ordering available through Grub Hub
- Touchless transactions instead of traditional meal card swiping
- Prepared to go to an entirely take-out menu if needed

Student Health Services:
- Separate entry for potential COVID patients; both in-person and telehealth appointments available to students
- Testing available for all students meeting CDC guidelines of symptomatic or close exposure; expanding contracts with testing labs to facilitate faster results; and self-swab kits are becoming available
- Pursuing purchase of Sophia 2 machine so that on-campus rapid testing can be conducted
- Contact tracing to be managed by medical staff in conjunction with local/state departments of health
- Online reporting process for those with knowledge of active cases or exposure, to be evaluated by medical staff

Mental health and academic support:
- Both in-person and telehealth counseling available to students
- Both group and individual counseling available; long-term needs will be referred to off-campus providers, as always
- Online/virtual tutoring available
- Online/virtual academic advising available

Activities and events:
- All events will meet social distancing guidelines
- Room/ballroom capacities reconfigured to meet social distancing guidelines
- Events restricted to University events only
- Student activities provided either online, or in small groups or outdoors while meeting social distancing guidelines
While MTSU has been working diligently to resume on-campus and in-person operations, the health and safety of the University community remains a priority. As such, President McPhee, Provost Byrnes, and our leadership team are monitoring daily several indicators that could trigger a change in our planning.

**Immediate action to move totally remote or online**
- Any orders mandating campus closure/decreased campus operations/work from home by state or local public health officials/government

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**Consultation with public health officials regarding need for closing or decreasing campus operations**
- Local and regional hospital/ICU capacity nears capacity, per public health officials
- On-campus isolation and quarantine rooms at full/near full capacity
- Case counts on campus significantly exceed county and/or regional case counts
- Absolute confirmed case counts rise to an unacceptable level in the county/region per public health officials
- Absentee rates from documented illness of MTSU faculty/staff/students exceed acceptable margins to continue on-ground experience

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**Consultation with public health officials regarding loosening campus restrictions and increasing “new normal” operations**
- Confirmation of decreased viral virulence or infectivity and/or development of improved treatment methods
- Widespread availability of immunization (safe vaccine)
It is currently known that the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets. Transmission occurs most frequently among those interacting within about 6 feet of an infected person. Current evidence suggests that COVID-19 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. Cleaning of visibly dirty and high-touch surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for preventing COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses.

To limit transmission of the novel coronavirus, MTSU is providing the following guidance from federal health agencies for cleaning and disinfecting rooms or areas of facilities on campus where those with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 have visited.

**Definitions of terms in this section:**

- **Community facilities:** most non-healthcare settings visited by the public outside of a household.
- **Cleaning:** removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs, but removing them lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.
- **Disinfecting:** using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but killing germs on a surface after cleaning can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

Many of the custodial services you have seen in the past in community facilities will continue as normal, including:

- Daily or more often cleaning of restrooms, lobbies, and break rooms
- Dusting and vacuuming
- Glass cleaning
- Emptying and relining trash and recycling receptacles

The appropriate custodial services department (Facilities Services, Housing, Dining, etc.) will clean campus buildings on a daily or routine basis, including enhanced standards for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces and high-traffic areas. For community facilities, including restrooms and elevators, this includes but is not limited to:

- Door knobs
- Handles
- Push buttons
- Toilets, faucets, and sinks
Cleaning and disinfecting products may be obtained through Facilities Services to allow departments to provide intermittent disinfecting beyond the routine cleaning and disinfecting for individual working areas as needed. Individual work areas may include, but are not limited to:

- Tables
- Countertops
- Handles
- Desks
- Phones
- Keyboards
- Touch screens
- Other frequently used equipment

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Utilize office waste receptacles for food waste and wet trash to control odors.
- Use provided cleaners to sanitize office space (i.e., keyboards, desk space, doorknobs, phones, etc.).
- Use good hand hygiene when touching all surfaces and use hand sanitizer before and after use.
- Be mindful of your work surfaces and minimize touching those items that are touched by others whenever possible.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Facilities after Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 cases

If a person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 is known to have been in a facility, cleaning and disinfecting of the facility, area, or space is required. Supervisors should immediately close off the affected area while awaiting the scheduled cleaning and disinfecting. In addition, report this information through our online reporting portal at [mtsu.edu/covidreporting](http://mtsu.edu/covidreporting).

Facilities Services, working with Health Services, will schedule the cleaning and disinfecting, as well as identify the appropriate safety procedures associated with the affected areas.

In addition to cleaning and disinfecting protocols, current guidance addresses safety measures such as room/space isolation, schedule for cleaning activities, and room/space ventilation. The University will follow measures specified in this guidance for all facilities, both residential and non-residential.
REGARDING YOUR OWN HEALTH AND SYMPTOMS

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>If you have symptoms that might be COVID-related and you are at home</td>
<td>You should not to come to campus if you have a COVID-related symptom or risk factor. You must report symptoms to your supervisor using the MTSU form at <a href="http://mtsu.edu/covidreporting">mtsu.edu/covidreporting</a>. You should visit your health care provider as soon as possible to be tested. While waiting for test results, you should isolate to avoid contact with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have symptoms that might be COVID-related and you are already on campus</td>
<td>You should leave campus if you develop a COVID-related symptom, and report it to your supervisor using the MTSU form at <a href="http://mtsu.edu/covidreporting">mtsu.edu/covidreporting</a>. You should visit your health care provider as soon as possible to be tested. While waiting for test results, you should isolate to avoid contact with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you receive a negative COVID test result and you feel no symptoms</td>
<td>You may return to work if you have a negative test result AND you have been symptom-free for 24 hours.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you receive a positive COVID test result and you feel no symptoms</td>
<td>You must isolate for at least 10 days from the date you took the test. The 10 days starts the day after the positive test. You may return to work on Day 11 if you have remained symptom-free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you receive a positive COVID test result and you are experiencing symptoms</td>
<td>You must isolate for at least 10 days from the start of symptoms and be symptom-free for 24 hours. The 10 days starts the day after symptoms start. You may resume contact with others on Day 11 if you have been symptom-free for 24 hours.</td>
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REGARDING THE TESTING STATUS OF OTHERS

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<tr>
<td>If you have been in close contact (defined as within 6 feet for more than 10 minutes) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19</td>
<td>You must quarantine for 14 days, starting the day AFTER the last contact with the person who is infected. You may resume contact with others on Day 15 if you have no symptoms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If someone you live with receives a positive COVID test result and you continue to share space with that person</td>
<td>You must quarantine for the whole time period during which the person has symptoms PLUS an additional 14 days after the person is no longer ill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have been in the presence of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, but you have not been in close contact (defined as within 6 feet for more than 10 minutes)</td>
<td>You do not need to quarantine or take any other action.</td>
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- **Isolation** separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.
- **Quarantine** separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.