

University of St. Thomas COVID-19 Response Plan

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II. **Background on Plan and Principles**

This COVID-19 Response Plan replaces the University of St. Thomas Preparedness Plan, which was originally published on June 23, 2020, and was regularly updated during the course of the 2020-21 academic year. While the availability of vaccines makes it possible to return to campus life in most ways, St. Thomas recognizes that COVID-19 continues to persist in our community. In responding to COVID-19, we will continue to be guided by and find inspiration in Catholic intellectual tradition and Catholic social thought as we strategize and make decisions.

Specifically:

- The University of St. Thomas is committed to providing a safe and healthy campus for all students, faculty, staff and visitors.
- University decisions will be guided by standards and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the American College Health Association (ACHA). St. Thomas will follow the law, including all public health directives.
- We will actively encourage each other to adopt a culture of care for others. We will practice health and safety measures to protect ourselves, our families and the wider community.
- We will promote a culture of respect and sensitivity. We recognize that this pandemic impacts community members differently based on socioeconomic status, health, geography, race, age and culture. We will be sensitive to and support all members of our community.
- We will prioritize providing a personalized and holistic student learning experience and caring for the whole person. We will support community members from diverse backgrounds in these policies and practices.
- We will seek to reasonably accommodate students, faculty and staff who need accommodations for medical reasons.
- We will communicate openly, compassionately and in a timely manner to the community and break down communication barriers that have existed. We will seek to make messages simple, clear and easy to follow.
- We recognize the mental health toll that the pandemic has on our community members and will respond to these needs.
- We will seek input from members of our community as we develop and improve our policies and procedures.
- Campus leaders will follow all best practices and participate fully in our campus initiatives that promote health and safety. All students, faculty and staff will be expected to participate in our culture of care and practices that help us maintain healthy conditions.

III. **Applicability**

This response plan applies to all members of the St. Thomas community: students, faculty, staff and any campus visitors and licensees. The plan will be reviewed regularly and updated based on current conditions and public health guidance.

IV. **Staffing Considerations and Remote Work**

The university is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for all employees.

In summer 2021, St. Thomas rolled out its new [Working Remotely Program](#) to allow employees to work with their supervisors on remote work arrangements that meet their needs, and the needs of the University. Between July 1 - August 1, 2021, all employees are expected to return to on-campus work unless their supervisor and the employee have agreed to a working remotely arrangement.

Employees who need an accommodation related to COVID-19 should contact the [Benefits Office](#) to discuss a request for reasonable accommodation.

V. **Health and Safety Protocols**

The university needs all community members to adhere to best practices for protecting their own health and the health of others. As such, all faculty, staff and students on campus and all visitors will be expected to follow health and safety protocols.

- A. **Social Distancing:** When possible, individuals who are not vaccinated should strive to maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others and should avoid crowded spaces and mass gatherings. When 6 feet of distance is not possible, unvaccinated individuals should strive to maintain as much distance as possible.
- B. **Masks and Other Face Coverings:**
- Starting August 23, St. Thomas will [require face coverings](#) in indoor public spaces when others are present. This applies to all community members and visitors regardless of vaccination status. This means face coverings are required in campus spaces such as:
 - Classrooms, labs and meeting rooms
 - Residence hall common areas, including lobbies and dining halls (unless eating)
 - Anderson Student Center
 - Reception and common areas in all university buildings
 - Campus shuttles
 - Center for Well-Being
 - Fully vaccinated individuals do not have to wear a face covering when in resident-only areas of a residence hall, when alone in an office or study space, or if no one else is present in a room. Additionally, face coverings will not be required for fully vaccinated individuals while they are:
 - Teaching a class or speaking at an event where they can maintain at least six feet from their students or audience; and
 - Exercising in the Anderson Athletic and Recreation Center or McCarthy gym (although they must wear a face covering when moving through these buildings).
 - Individuals who are not fully vaccinated are required to wear a mask or other face covering indoors on campus and outdoors when physical distancing is not possible.

Face coverings may be removed if the individual is in a private office, workspace, or residence hall room and others are not present and when eating, showering and swimming.

- St. Thomas continues to strongly encourage face coverings outdoors for large gatherings and in situations where social distancing is not possible, and they may be required at specific outdoor opening events.
- C. **Hand-washing and Respiratory Etiquette:** All community members are asked to continue to practice good hand-washing and respiratory etiquette, which reduces the spread of germs and viruses.

VI. **Vaccination**

On August 2, 2021, due to the increasing spread of the Delta variant, St. Thomas announced that all faculty, staff and students are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19. This decision is driven by our desire to provide a safe, high-quality and uninterrupted experience for our students, faculty and staff this fall. Vaccines are available at the Center for Well-Being and at variety of local pharmacies and clinics. Additional information is available on the [Center for Well-Being Website](#). Information about the pro-vaccine stance of the Catholic Church is available [here](#) and [here](#). Individuals may request exemptions to the requirement for medical reasons or based on sincerely held religious or conscientious beliefs.

VII. **Screening for Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19 and Reporting Concerns**

A. **Stay Home When Sick**

Individuals who are feeling sick should not come to campus. Individuals who become ill while they are on campus must go home. If a manager observes that an employee is working on campus while sick, the manager must send the employee home. Students who are ill should be directed to return to their home or residence hall room and to contact the Center for Well-Being to speak with a triage nurse for further direction.

B. **Reporting and Responding to Confirmed Cases**

In order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on campus, St. Thomas has implemented a protocol for responding to confirmed cases of COVID-19.

1. All Community Members Must Report If They Have a Confirmed Case

All members of the St. Thomas community who are working, living, learning or otherwise spending time on campus are required to notify the Center for Well-Being if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 by submitting the [Student Self-Report Form](#) or [Faculty/Staff Self-Report Form](#), which are available on OneStThomas. Faculty and staff should also notify their supervisor/department chair of their inability to come to campus using normal call-in procedures for the department. Students who are tested at the Center for Well-Being and who consent to the sharing of their positive test results are not required to complete the self-report form.

2. St. Thomas Response to Confirmed Cases

St. Thomas will work with MDH, which will conduct contact tracing. In addition, St. Thomas will monitor for potential outbreaks.

3. Privacy and Confidentiality

The Center for Well-Being will treat reported information as confidential and will share information only as needed to ensure compliance with public health guidelines, directives and this plan. Names of impacted individuals will never be shared in public communications.

All community members are expected to help maintain the privacy and anonymity of individuals who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are quarantining due to COVID-19 exposure. Individuals who are able to identify the individual based on the circumstances are expected to be discreet. For example, it is OK to share you are quarantining due to a direct contact with an individual with COVID-19, but do not share the individual's name. We want to be respectful and supportive of all community members.

4. Coordination with State and Local Health Officials

The confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis will be reported to local and/or state health authorities by the health care provider that conducted the test, including the Center for Well-Being if it conducted the test. St. Thomas may also share the information provided by students and employees directly with MDH. St. Thomas will work closely with state and local health officials on any recommended measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. St. Thomas community members who have been in direct contact with a person with a confirmed diagnosis may be contacted by state or local health officials as part of contact tracing efforts.

5. Community Alerts

In accordance with the Clery Act, St. Thomas will inform the community if there is a confirmed outbreak of COVID-19 on campus that could pose an immediate threat to the health or safety of the campus community. The determination of whether cases are linked and constitute an outbreak will be made in accordance with Clery Act and public health guidance.

C. Isolation and Quarantine

Any member of the St. Thomas community who is diagnosed with COVID-19 is expected to follow the CDC [isolation guidelines](#) to help protect the health of the greater community and prevent disease transmission. They should work under the care and direction of their medical provider and collaborate with campus contact tracers to determine when they are able to return to campus or to the classroom. In general, individuals are [expected to stay home](#) until they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without use of medicine that reduces fever) **and** at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared **and** other symptoms have improved.

All members of the St. Thomas community should comply with recommendations to stay home and [quarantine](#) if feeling sick.

Individuals who are close contacts with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 are expected to follow [quarantine guidelines](#) communicated to them by public health authorities or a

medical provider. According to the [CDC](#), individuals who are fully vaccinated and who are not exhibiting any symptoms are not required to quarantine.

VIII. Testing

The Center for Well-Being is currently prioritizing testing of **symptomatic** patients for COVID-19 using molecular (PCR) tests; asymptomatic testing may be available at the Center for Well-Being as space permits. Expanded testing of asymptomatic individuals may be utilized in specific situations, such as localized clusters of COVID-19 cases on campus and other appropriate situations. St. Thomas will continue to work with MDH to provide options for mass-testing events and targeted testing of areas of concern.

The Center for Well-Being has partnered with University of Minnesota/Mayo Lab System as well as Quest Diagnostics to ensure that there is adequate access to testing supplies and services in the event that recommendations change and expanded testing is recommended.

Faculty and staff who are sick should contact their primary health care provider for testing. See the [MDH website](#) for additional information about testing.

Important: All individuals who are notified of a positive test result must notify St. Thomas using the [self-reporting form](#) on OneStThomas.

IX. Travel

Starting Monday, August 2, St. Thomas requires COVID-19 vaccines for community members participating in university-sponsored travel. This policy applies to:

- St. Thomas employees (faculty, staff and student workers), students, student clubs and organizations, contractors and volunteers and any external participants in St. Thomas-sponsored travel
- Trips of any duration and any distance from the St. Thomas campuses that involve air travel (both domestic and international) or overnight accommodations for one or more night
- Any business-related trips where work is conducted for the benefit of St. Thomas or using St. Thomas resources

All faculty, staff and students participating in university-sponsored travel will need to take the following two steps:

1. Register in the [St. Thomas Travel Registry](#), or confirm that the group leader has registered the travel (including group travel led by a St. Thomas faculty or staff member, such as a St. Thomas athletic team, choir or orchestra).
2. Complete the Center for Well-Being's [Consent to Share COVID-19 Vaccination Information](#) form found in myHealthPortal.

This decision is aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for domestic travel during COVID-19 that advise unvaccinated people to delay travel until they are fully vaccinated. For questions, please call Tim Lewis, AVP for Global Learning and Strategy, at (651) 962-6741 or lewi0118@stthomas.edu.

Because of safety and operational considerations related to travel, individuals who have an exemption from the campus vaccine requirement will not be able to participate in university-sponsored travel unless they have requested and are granted a reasonable accommodation following the University's standard processes. Students seeking a medical accommodation may contact Disability Resources. Employees seeking a medical or religious accommodation may contact Human Resources. Requests for accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis following a review of relevant information, including country and local conditions at the travel destination(s), availability and quality of medical facilities, CDC and State Department guidance, operational considerations, and applicable travel requirements. Travel sites and program partners may have separate vaccine requirements over which the University does not have control. Due to the rapid spread of the Delta variant, the ability to reasonably accommodate unvaccinated travelers is limited.

Further information is available on the [Travel Risk Management OneStThomas page](#).

X. Events

As of the most recent publication of this Plan, the University is continuing to host on-campus events for internal and external groups. Events must follow all University restrictions currently in place.

XI. Planning for Potential Surge in Cases or Closing

The university has developed plans to respond to a possible surge in cases on campus or in the community. Such plans are consistent with public health guidance and directives. A surge in cases or other external factors may impact campus operations, including changes to dining hall or residence hall operations, mask mandate(s), changes to service levels or building hours, changes to course modalities, or a possible need to place additional or all classes online and closure of some residence hall(s). Factors that will be considered include government directives, the level of transmission, options for reducing transmission risks, community compliance with protocols, and the ability of the university to effectively manage on-campus cases. A list of "[Key Considerations](#)" for changes in operation is on OneStThomas.

In the event that a surge in cases locally or nationally causes St. Thomas to put some or all classes online, tuition and fees will not be refunded.