

University of St. Thomas COVID-19 Response Plan

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II. **Background on Plan and Principles**

The COVID-19 Response Plan, first published on August 5, 2021, replaced the University of St. Thomas Preparedness Plan and was regularly updated throughout the 2021-22 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. 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.

Effective January 2, 2022, St. Thomas instituted a new [temporary COVID-19 emergency leave program](#).

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. **Masks and Other Face Coverings:** Currently, St. Thomas does not require face coverings except in clinical areas in the Center for Well-Being and on a limited basis following infection or exposure to COVID-19 (see Section V.C below). Masking requirements may change as conditions related to COVID-19 transmission in the St. Thomas and surrounding communities change. For example, the following conditions may lead to reinstating the requirement:

- If the number of on-campus cases over a two-week period is 3% or more of the total on-campus population,
- If the community level for COVID-19 is rated “high” by the CDC in either Ramsey or Hennepin Counties
- If city leaders require face coverings in city buildings or put other mitigation policies in place

If asked to wear a mask in a private office or other small, enclosed space, community members are expected to honor that request. Please respect those who still need or choose to wear a face covering. Many members of our community live with or support family members who are immunocompromised or may have a pre-existing condition that requires them to wear a face covering even if they are vaccinated.

B. **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.

C. **Testing:** St. Thomas strongly encourages being tested before returning to campus for fall. In addition, all unvaccinated members of the St. Thomas community are strongly

encouraged to engage in weekly COVID-19 testing. The [Minnesota Department of Health](#) has information about testing options and locations.

VI. Vaccination

On August 2, 2021, St. Thomas announced that all faculty, staff and students are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19. This decision was driven by our desire to provide a safe, high-quality and uninterrupted experience for our students, faculty and staff. Vaccines are available at the Center for Well-Being and at variety of local pharmacies and clinics. Information about the pro-vaccine stance of the Catholic Church is available [here](#) and [here](#).

St. Thomas updated its vaccine requirements in November 2021. Information for faculty and staff was emailed on November 10, 2021 and is available on [OneStThomas](#). Information for students was emailed on November 30, 2021 and is available on the [Center for Well-Being website](#). Individuals may request medical and religious exemptions to the vaccine requirement.

St. Thomas strongly encourages all members of the community who are eligible to receive a booster. The Center for Well-Being has [booster appointments available](#), or find [appointments at other locations](#) near you.

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 test positive for 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 COVID Care team will respond to reported cases and provide instructions on isolation requirements and resources. In addition, St. Thomas will monitor for potential outbreaks.

3. Privacy and Confidentiality

The Center for Well-Being and the COVID Care Team 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.

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. In addition, St. Thomas publishes a [dashboard](#) on a weekly basis with information about cases on campus.

C. **Isolation and Quarantine**

Isolation and quarantine guidance is available [here](#).

Any member of the St. Thomas community who is diagnosed with COVID-19 is expected to follow MDH and CDC [isolation guidelines](#) to help protect the health of the greater community and prevent disease transmission. In general, individuals are expected to isolate until they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without use of medicine that reduces fever) **and** at least 5 days have passed after symptoms first appeared **and** other symptoms have improved. In addition, individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 must continue to wear a high-quality mask around others until at least 10 days have passed after symptoms first appeared.

All members of the St. Thomas community who are feeling sick with COVID-19 symptoms should [stay home and be tested](#).

Individuals who are close contacts with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 are expected to [mask](#) in accordance with CDC and MDH guidelines for ten (10) days and get a test after day 5. According to the [CDC](#) and MDH, individuals are not required to quarantine, regardless of their vaccination status.

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. The Center for Well-Being will bill insurance for testing costs. 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.

Please note you can order free at-home tests from the U.S. Postal Service at this [link](#) or from Minnesota at this [link](#). You may also be able to obtain free at-home tests through your health insurer.

IX. Travel

A. Vaccine

Effective July 1, 2022: The University of St. Thomas strongly recommends that all travelers -- domestic or international -- be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and up-to-date on boosters. It is the obligation of the traveler to know of, and comply with, vaccination requirements of the location(s) where they will travel, including the entry and return requirements of each country or other applicable governing body, and the specific requirements of the host site.

Previously, St. Thomas required that all community members participating in university-sponsored international travel to be fully vaccinated and boosted if eligible.

This decision is aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. For questions, please call Tim Lewis, AVP for Global Learning and Strategy, at (651) 962-6741 or lewi0118@stthomas.edu.

B. Travel Registry

All faculty, staff and students participating in university-sponsored international or domestic travel will need to 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). Group leaders are expected to anticipate the possibility that a member of the group may need to quarantine and isolate during the trip, or that another health emergency may arise and to have a plan of steps to follow, including notification to a supervisor or Public Safety, should that occur.

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.