

Virginia Tech outlines its testing, tracing, and case management plan for the fall semester

In preparation for faculty, staff, and students to return to campus this fall, Virginia Tech has developed a comprehensive testing, tracing, and case management plan (https://vt.edu/content/dam/vtnews_vt_edu/documents/testing-tracing-plan.pdf) as part of its broader effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

“From the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic to our planning for the fall 2020 semester, we have sought to maintain the continuity of our vital teaching, research, and engagement missions while preserving the health and well-being of the university population and the broader community,” said President Tim Sands. “In March, that meant rapidly transitioning to remote learning and essential operations status, with 80 percent of our employees working remotely. We reduced our student resident population by over 95 percent.”

“Since March, we have learned more about COVID-19 and the effectiveness of strategies to limit the spread of the coronavirus. This growing body of knowledge along with our resident expertise in epidemiology, testing, and modeling has informed our planning for the fall. The testing, tracing, and case management plan we are releasing now is designed to allow our university mission to be fulfilled while limiting the spread of the virus and mitigating the risks for our most vulnerable populations,” Sands said.

The plan includes guidelines for initial and ongoing screening and testing of students and employees, cooperation with local health department contact-tracing investigations, and effective case management within the university population should an employee or student become infected. The approach outlined in the plan is based on the most recent public health information and may be modified as more is learned about COVID-19 and the virus responsible (SARS-CoV-2).

“The testing strategy within the plan will remain flexible, allowing the university to adjust the number and frequency of tests in response to the changing COVID-19 landscape,” said Mike Mulhare, assistant vice president for emergency management. “Implementation of the university’s testing plan will be coordinated by our Schiffert Health Center. Tracing efforts will be in support of the Virginia Department of Health and the New River Health District, who are charged with managing tracing for

the commonwealth.”

In the interest of mitigating the risk for the campus and surrounding communities to the extent possible, all members of the Virginia Tech community who plan to return to work, go to class, and live on campus during the fall semester will be strongly encouraged to participate in COVID-19 screening, through a combination of daily health verification surveys and testing.

All students will be asked to self-quarantine and wear a face covering for 14 days before arriving on campus. Students living in university housing signed the Residential Life COVID-19 Health and Well-being Commitment (https://housing.vt.edu/content/dam/housing_vt_edu/assets/doc/Residential_Life_Health_and_Wellbeing_Commitment.pdf) as part of their housing contract, and they will be expected to abide by the best practices and expectations in personal hygiene and physical distancing that were outlined in the commitment.

Students planning to live on and off campus will be strongly encouraged to secure a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) COVID-19 test result within five days prior to returning to the area. Those who test positive will be required to self-isolate (if symptomatic) or self-quarantine (if asymptomatic) in accordance with their local health department requirements before returning to a Virginia Tech facility or location.

Additionally, the approximately 9,000 students living in university housing this fall can be tested upon their arrival on campus during the move-in days (<https://vtnews.vt.edu/notices/student-affairs-movein-2020.html>), via a testing clinic coordinated by Schiffert Health Center.

“If all our on-campus students participate in this screening program, we will have a very reliable snapshot of health and well-being of our student population, including students from areas of high prevalence, both within and outside of Virginia,” Mulhare said. “That information will help us make informed decisions about future testing and mitigation strategies.”

As the fall semester continues, ongoing diagnostic testing, screening, and surveillance of students will continue through Schiffert Health Center. Testing of symptomatic individuals will be given the highest priority, followed by testing of individuals identified as close contacts of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. Those at increased risk of exposure due to a higher contact environment will

also be considered a priority for testing.

Students and employees may also be tested through their primary care physician, urgent care locations, select pharmacies, and the local health department.

Individuals identified by Virginia Tech as testing positive for COVID-19 will be reported to the Virginia Department of Health in accordance with the Code of Virginia. As the university becomes aware of individuals who have tested positive, it will notify the health department to coordinate contact-tracing and to provide additional information as requested. To ensure individual privacy, individuals who test positive will not be publicly identified.

“In support of public health, a safer campus community, and in the spirit of *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), students and employees who have tested positive or are presumed positive, or are identified by a public health professional or health care provider as a close contact, should self-disclose to the university’s Case Management Team,” Mulhare said.

Before the fall term begins, the Case Management Team will develop a protocol for self-disclosure that will include an email address, phone number, and website. Watch the vt.edu/ready website for details.

“Early detection is a critical component of containment and mitigating risk to our community,” Mulhare said. “Notifying the Case Management Team will provide the university an opportunity to quickly identify potential risks to the health of university community members, and it allows for swift action to contain the spread and provide additional support if necessary.”

The university’s Case Management Team will maintain the university case management system and will coordinate on-campus quarantine, isolation, and decontamination efforts. Medical professionals from the university’s Environmental Health and Safety office and Schiffert Health Center will serve as liaisons to the Virginia Department of Health. In addition, team members will assist with outreach to students identified as contacts, as requested by the New River Health District, including coordinating medical evaluation for residential students through Schiffert.

In addition to Environmental Health and Safety and Schiffert Health Center representatives, the Case Management Team consists of representatives from Hokie Wellness, Student Affairs, the Dean of Students office, and Human Resources. The team will be supported by departments across campus, including Emergency Management, the Office for Equity and Accessibility, and the Division of Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities.

Students who test positive for COVID-19 should inform the Dean of Students office, which will provide ongoing support for the personal, social, and academic needs of each student. If a student living on campus tests positive, Schiffert will work with Housing and Residence Life staff to relocate the student to New Hall West, which will serve as

the residence hall for students who are isolated. While in isolation, students will receive daily health check calls from Schiffert staff.

Employees are required to notify their supervisor if they must miss work due to illness or are asked to self-quarantine by the Virginia Department of Health. Employees should also report known university contacts and work locations to the Case Management Team to assist the team in determining if there are any additional actions needed by the university.

All employees and students will be required to complete an online coronavirus awareness training program prior to arriving on campus or another Virginia Tech location, and will be strongly encouraged to complete a daily health verification survey called Hokie Health. This survey will be available on the “Hokie Ready” public safety and preparedness mobile app the week of Aug. 3, and an alternative method for completing the survey will be provided apart from the mobile app. More details on the app and the online training program will be shared soon on vt.edu/ready.

For detailed information on the university’s preparations for the fall semester, visit vt.edu/ready.

Meal Planning 101 virtual workshop

People who meal plan generally feel more prepared for the week, spend less mental energy figuring out meals, save money, and stick to their nutrition goals more closely.

However, when most of us hear the words “meal planning,” we think of searching through cookbooks looking for meals that taste good and are quick and easy to fix. It can seem overwhelming, so we resort to going to the grocery store every day, waiting until 4 p.m. to figure out what to make for dinner, or staring at the fridge with no ideas in sight.

There is a better way. Meal planning can help, and it doesn’t have to be complicated. You just need a good system!

In this meal planning workshop, participants will learn to:

- overcome common barriers to meal planning
- set up for success before beginning the process
- build a diverse and delicious recipe bank
- take the mental strain out of making grocery lists
- cut back on waste and store foods properly

Participants will receive printable meal planning and grocery list templates, a two-week sample healthy meal plan, a collection of healthy recipes to begin building a recipe bank, and helpful resources to get started with planning.

This workshop will be held Wednesday, July 15, from 12-1 p.m., and will be taught by Lauren Shelor, registered dietitian. Registration (https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3IWMnGZGUhSQL8V) is required and space is limited. After registering, participants will receive a Zoom link that can be used to log in on the day of the workshop.

For more information or questions, contact Hokie Wellness at hokiewellness@vt.edu.

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