



**TO:** Eastern Faculty, Staff, Students, Parents and Visitors

**FROM:** Dr. Thomas Striplin, President

**DATE:** August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Covid Update for Fall 2022

I hope that everyone has had a safe and relaxing summer. As we look ahead to the start of the fall semester with classes starting on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, I wanted to provide some updates on current Covid safety protocols at Eastern. The availability of vaccines and boosters has significantly decreased the extent of severe illnesses and hospitalizations from COVID-19 and antigen testing is now widely available. While these preventive measures have allowed us to ease restrictions over time, I think it's important to emphasize that we are not out of this pandemic yet. Cases are still surfacing here and there so we must continue to take precautions to keep Eastern a safe place to learn and work as well as respect that we all have varied levels of concern about the virus.

### **Daily Health Self-Assessments**

Staff, students, parents and visitors should all be performing daily health assessments. We ask that you continue to take personal responsibility and to demonstrate COVID-19 etiquette. If any individual should exhibit any of the symptoms, or if they have been exposed to any person with known Covid, **DO NOT** come to campus until you can get tested. Staff should immediately contact their supervisors and students should contact their instructors for in-person courses on procedures for coursework completion if they are exhibiting symptoms. Students are not to be penalized in any way if they are unable to come to class due to a Covid situation. Faculty will work with these students to make sure coursework is completed until the student can return to class.

### **Vaccinations**

Eastern will not require students and employees to verify or update their vaccination status with the Human Resources Office. Vaccinations will not be required, but are highly encouraged. If you have not been fully vaccinated and boosted, I cannot stress the importance of getting the vaccine.

### **Testing**

Eastern will not require COVID-19 testing prior to returning to campus and will not require students to report a positive test to the Human Resources Office. However, students and employees are encouraged to take advantage of self-antigen testing or community testing opportunities *before* and *during* the semester. Students who test negative through an at-home antigen test prior to coming to campus should test again within a few days of classes starting.



COVID-19 tests are readily available through local health departments, pharmacies and through the federal government's website, *covidtests.gov*, which allows individuals to sign up for free COVID-19 tests that will be shipped directly to the individual's household.

I do advise that everyone review and follow CDC guidelines for isolation after receiving a positive test. CDC guidelines can be found [here](#).

### **Face Masks/Coverings**

It is well established that wearing a mask while indoors reduces the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19; however, face masks will not be required on any Eastern location unless there is a sudden high positivity rate within a short period of time. If any individual tests positive for COVID-19, he or she must isolate for five days and it is highly recommended that he or she wear a mask for an additional five days to protect the health of others (see CDC guidelines above).

While masks may not be required on campus, the use of them is optional. There will be face masks available at the front desk for any individual who requests one. Virtual options for non-class office meetings (i.e. appointments with student services staff, advisor meetings) will be made available for those individuals not comfortable with coming to campus.

### **Social Distancing**

It is still best practice to social distance whenever possible especially in high traffic areas and poorly ventilated spaces.

### **Proper Hand Washing/Sanitizing**

This should be an automatic for everyone. Please continue to properly wash/sanitize your hands before leaving the restroom, eating food and touching your mouth, handling garbage and especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing,

### **Contact Tracing**

Eastern will no longer be requiring students, parents, staff and visitors to sign in upon entry to any of its locations.

We look forward to seeing all of you back on campus in the weeks ahead. As always, should the CDC, the State of West Virginia or the county health department implement new guidelines, Eastern will update our guidelines accordingly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas C. Striplin".

Dr. Thomas Striplin