

# SAFE AND HEALTHY RETURN TO CAMPUS

Updated January 11, 2020

This document is updated frequently to reflect changes in policy and procedures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Higher education institutions are an important component of Vermont's economy, workforce development system, culture and vitality. Sterling College, in partnership with the state of Vermont, aims to make Vermont a safe place to attend college during the COVID-19 public health emergency by establishing strict safety protocols. Employees and students must comply with this guidance to protect their own health and safety, as well as that of the greater Sterling Community in both Craftsbury and New Castle, KY. Those who do not observe these stipulations risk disciplinary action, which is outlined in our [COVID Handbook](#).

These protocols are in addition to, and not a substitute for, the State of Vermont's existing Work Safe Guidance. In the event these two documents contradict one another, this document supersedes the Work Safe Guidance. These guidelines aim to minimize the likelihood of an outbreak, and—if one occurs—reduce its severity.

This document was created in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Health, the Vermont Department of Public Service, the Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD).

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- I. Decrease risk of individuals infected with COVID-19 from entering the campus through effective public health prevention.
  - a. Health Safety Contract & Spring Semester COVID-19 Orientation: All students, faculty and staff shall participate in a COVID-19 Orientation Training and sign the Commitment to Shared Responsibility ([Student version](#) & [Employee version](#)). The Commitment to Shared Responsibility is a Sterling-specific health safety pledge that affirms the individual is familiar and willing to comply with the state's COVID-19 restrictions and Sterling health policies. The COVID-19 Orientation Training is a short course that reviews Sterling's COVID-19 policies.
  - b. Quarantine: In order to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, staff and the community, Sterling College has implemented strict quarantine procedures for students returning to campus at the beginning of semesters, after breaks, or after

out-of-state travel by students to places requiring quarantine using one of the following health protocols:

- **Home state:** If traveling to Vermont in a private vehicle without making a prolonged stop, individual must quarantine at home for 14 days immediately prior to traveling to Vermont (individuals may complete a shorter quarantine if they receive a negative COVID-19 test after day 7 in their home state and travel directly to Vermont without breaking the quarantine). Please review Vermont Department of Health's [Quarantine Guidelines](#); OR
- **In Vermont after public or multi-family transit to Vermont:** If traveling to Vermont with people from multiple households, via bus, rail or commercial airlines, individuals must quarantine for 14 days upon arrival to Vermont (after day 7 the individual may get a COVID-19 test and upon receiving a negative result, end their quarantine). Please review Vermont Department of Health's [Quarantine Guidelines](#).

Students who quarantine in Vermont may do so in one of the following locations:

- At a private residence in Vermont, including the student's Vermont apartment (for off-campus students); OR
- At a lodging property in Vermont including hotels and short-term rentals; OR
- At Sterling College. Students will be required to quarantine in a designated location on campus. All meals will be provided. The quarantine shall end after 14 days OR after the student receives a negative COVID-19 test after day 7 of quarantine. In order to protect students and others, students in quarantine must follow current State of Vermont [quarantine requirements](#). Option to quarantine on campus will be available to students with residence hall contracts with an additional charge to cover minimal board fees.

For students who have a positive test on day 7, isolation procedures and contact tracing will be immediately initiated as in section 3. These quarantine policies allow the Department of Health to work with colleges to implement isolation and quarantine policies for ill students and any individuals who have had close personal contact with those students.

Special note about college students returning home after being on campus: All students who are returning home from a college or university, in-state or out-of-state, shall quarantine at home for fourteen days, with a test for COVID-19 strongly encouraged, or quarantine for no less than 7 days at which time they must be tested for COVID-19.

- c. Daily Health Screening: All students and employees must complete a daily health screening prior to interacting with anyone on the campus, including going to class,

going to a dining hall, or participating in any campus activity or any work setting. This screening survey shall require an individual to verify that they have had no symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea) in the last 24 hours. Faculty, staff, and work program advisors will ensure all students have completed the Daily Health Screening Survey before class, work, or group meetings.

- d. Reduce Visitors: Students may have two guests with them on move-in or move-out day. The guest must meet State of Vermont travel restrictions OR conduct a contactless drop off and quarantine during their visit to Vermont. Sterling College will limit other outside visitors and have no visitors to residence halls, unless authorized by the Dean of Student Life (for emergency, medical, or facility needs).

During a contactless drop off, guests may not enter any college facilities, must limit activities outside the car to helping the student unload at the curb, and must avoid contact (within 6 feet of any individual) with anyone outside their household. Those guests unable to complete a day trip to conduct the drop off may stay at a lodging property only if they quarantine at that property for the duration of the stay. Quarantine means they do not leave the room or house in which they are staying and make no trips to the grocery store, restaurants or any other places where they may come in contact with others. Using lodging property amenities such as pools, spas, gyms, recreation equipment or other general use facilities is also not permitted. If a guest traveling from a quarantine county stays with family or friends at a private residence, they must isolate during their stay - avoiding all contact with their host in compliance with the state's ban on multi-household gatherings.

Special note about families conducting pick-ups: Unlike drop offs, a person picking up a student from campus is mixing two households and should take extreme caution to stay physically distanced from one another. When traveling in the same vehicle, remain masked, leave windows open and sit as far apart as possible. Both must quarantine for 14 days, or 7 days and a negative test, upon return to Vermont no matter where they are returning from or if they quarantined before returning to Vermont.

For faculty and staff, if you deem it necessary to host a visitor on campus, you must receive permission from a member of the college's President's Cabinet. Before arriving to campus, the visitor must respond no to all the following questions:

- Have you traveled outside of the state within the past 14 days?
- Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the past 14 days?

- In the past 24 hours, have you experienced any of the following symptoms: fever(temperature of 100.4F or higher), runny nose, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath, new muscle aches or chills, new change in your sense of taste or smell?
- e. Testing: Sterling College will ensure that all students (no matter where they come from) will undergo a COVID-19 testing protocol arranged for by the institution upon a student's return to campus for the semester, upon return from a break, or if they travel out of state to places requiring quarantine by the state's travel requirements. Sterling College will conduct weekly surveillance testing of students, faculty, and staff that participate in on-campus activities. The numbers tested and frequency of testing will be determined in response to the level of COVID-19 activity in the local community and region. This testing requirement does not eliminate the need for quarantine. In addition to symptomatic and contact tracing COVID-19 testing, Sterling College will administer the following testings:
- All students (including Vermonters) will receive a 'day zero' test conducted within 48 hours of arrival at campus.
  - All students (including Vermonters) must have a second test done at day 7.
  - All students and on-campus staff will participate in weekly surveillance.

All employees who conduct work on campus will be required to participate in surveillance testing conducted by Sterling College.

Kentucky Campus will collaborate with the Henry County Health Department for their testing.

- f. Travel: All institutional out-of-state travel shall be suspended except with institutional leadership permission. Residential Students shall adhere to travel guidelines as communicated by Sterling College. Students residing off campus and employees shall adhere to travel guidelines as communicated by the [ACCD travel policy](#) or plan to quarantine. Upon return from any out-of-state travel, whether institutional or personal, students and employees will follow ACCD travel quarantine policy.

Kentucky campus:As of December 14, 2020, there is [a travel advisory in effect](#) in Kentucky. Public health officials and the governor's office advise all out-of-state travel beyond essential travel within border states will require a 14 day quarantine on return to Kentucky or adherence to [CDC guidance](#) for a shortened quarantine period.

- g. Change Academic Schedule: Sterling College has modified the academic calendar to reduce the instances of students traveling outside of Vermont and returning to

the campus. Sterling College's modified academic calendar can be found on [our website](#).

For the Spring Semester, Sterling College has a later start than usual, and has eliminated the traditional Spring Break with an alternative break that encourages students to remain in Vermont and on campus.

- h. Reduce on-campus events: To protect the health and safety of our community, Sterling College will restrict on-campus programming for the Spring Semester, including events that would encourage large crowds such as parents' weekend and alumni weekend. All on campus events will comply with [ACCD event guidance](#).
2. Decrease transmission of COVID-19 among staff and students once on campus through effective public health measures.
    - a. Face Coverings: Face coverings are required to be worn by all faculty, staff, students and visitors when on campus and in the presence of others at all times, except when eating meals at a minimum of 6 feet away from others or when actively participating in strenuous exercise at a minimum of 6 feet away from others. In these instances, a face covering should be readily available to put on quickly in the event that distancing becomes impossible during interpersonal interactions, or when occupying shared spaces. Sterling College has a supply of face coverings available for faculty, staff, and students if individuals have a low supply. To receive more face coverings, individuals may contact the Associate Dean of Student Life or the Director of Wellness Services.
    - b. Health Screenings: All students and employees must complete a daily health screening prior to interacting with anyone on the campus, including going to class, going to a dining hall, or participating in any campus activity or any work setting. This screening survey shall require an individual to verify that the individual has no symptoms of COVID-19 (including fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea). Sterling students and employees will use the "Sterling College Daily Health Screening" form to perform their daily health screening.
    - c. Contact Tracing Journal: Students and employees are encouraged to keep a contact journal of other people with whom there has been close contact each day. This will make it easier to make contact with these individuals so they can take proper precautions to prevent further spread of COVID-19 should a Sterling College student or employee with whom they have been in contact become ill.

- d. Hand Hygiene: Students, faculty, and staff will have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer. Handwashing or hand sanitization is required frequently.
- e. Cleaning and Disinfecting: All common spaces (when open to students, faculty and staff) and equipment, including bathrooms, frequently touched surfaces and doors, tools and equipment, and vehicles will be cleaned regularly and, when possible, prior to transfer from one person to another, in accordance with CDC guidance.
- f. Physical Distancing: Students, faculty, and staff must observe strict social distancing of 6 feet or more when in the presence of individuals outside of designated household units. The occupancy of designated common areas will be limited, so that occupants maintain strict social distancing of no less than 6 feet per individual.
- g. Dining Halls: Dunbar Dining Hall will be open for meal pick-up for students and employees. Residential students can eat meals in their pod's residential hall or outside with pod-mates. Commuter Students can eat their meals in the CRC, outside, or in the classroom, six feet apart or more from others. Employees can eat meals in their office. Due to the multi-household gathering ban, meals can not be shared with others outside an individual's household unit. In addition to the established meal plan, residential students will receive weekly delivery of "snacks and basics". It will be the Community or Work Advisors' responsibility to submit a weekly nourishment form no later than 5pm Sunday evening for requests.

If quarantining, Vermont campus residential students will have their meals delivered three times a day (twice on weekends) to their Living & Learning Pods (LLPs) from the Sterling kitchen. Meal delivery windows will be:

Breakfast 7am-8am

Lunch 11:45am-1:00pm

Dinner 5:00pm-6:00pm

Note: These are windows. Meals will be delivered within these time frames, not precisely at the beginning of meal time. The responsibility of receiving food deliveries will be directed to the CA or advisory unit of each LLP. Any issues should be directly addressed to the Director of Dining Services.

Each pod will be set up with cutlery, plates, glassware, and space provided for serving and table and chairs for dining. Clear guidelines for students and staff will be established for cleaning, disposal, recycling, and composting. Each pod will need to communicate directly and clearly with the kitchen should any issue arise, or if any item is needed.

Kentucky residential students will continue to provide their own dining services and will follow strict cleaning protocols for kitchen facilities.

- h. Classrooms: All residential students will gather together in self-contained units - 'pods' - that live and learn together. These small groups of students, ranging from 7 to 18 students in size, will share a residence hall, dine together, study the same package of courses together, and work together. Each Living & Learning Pod (LLP) will be dedicated to specific areas of study and supported by a small team of dedicated faculty and staff. Most students will participate in two to three different LLPs through the course of the semester; one in Spring Block 1, one in Spring Block 2, and one in Spring Intensive. Sterling College's LLP structure provides assigned use of classrooms and common spaces that restricts density of use to only the students and instructors within the assigned pod. Classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected each morning by facilities and additional cleaning of classrooms will be conducted by student workers within the assigned pod. There will be clear cleaning protocols and rotas in place for all common spaces.

To meet the needs of all our students, we are offering two Spring 2021 semester options for undergraduate students.

1. The on-campus option: return to campus with a mix of in-person and online (asynchronous)/remote (synchronous) instruction within our Living and Learning Pod structure.
2. The at-home option: remain at home with online/remote instruction.

**All students and faculty are required to wear face coverings in the classrooms, labs, studios, etc., at all times. Exceptions are permitted if participating in strenuous exercise or activity outdoors at a minimum of 6 feet away from others.**

A face covering should be readily available to put on quickly in the event that distancing becomes impossible during interpersonal interactions, or when occupying shared spaces.

Students, faculty, and staff are expected to observe strict social distancing of 6 feet when in the presence of individuals outside of designated household units. The occupancy of classrooms, labs, lounges, study spaces, meeting rooms, and other designated common areas have been adjusted so that students, faculty, staff and visitors maintain strict social distancing of no less than 6 feet per individual. Residential students within the same pod will be allowed to sit closer than 6 ft together in the classroom, but will still be required to wear a mask.

Off-campus field-trips that require transportation in a Sterling College van are restricted during the first two weeks of Spring 2021 Block 1 or until the college receives all 'Day 7' COVID-19 test results. This is out of an abundance of caution to

ensure risk of transmitting COVID-19 remains low while students are awaiting their 'day 7' COVID-19 test results.

- i. Residence Hall Density/ Residential Pod Structure: The Living and Learning Pod structure allows for residential students to adopt a COVID household unit approach to their living quarters, where they will be able to exercise their own preference and discretion to interact with each other indoors without facial coverings and social distancing. For more information about residential household units, exceptions and additional restrictions, refer to section o. Multi-household Gatherings below.

No outside visitors are allowed into Vermont residential halls, including students from other residential pods or commuter students.

In Kentucky, residential students will also exercise their own preference and discretion to interact with each other without facial coverings and social distancing. No outside visitors will be allowed in residence halls. Employees and non-resident students will follow strict protocols for facilities use that are within residential hall space.

- j. Libraries: For the Spring Semester, Sterling College's Brown Library will be utilized as a classroom space for an assigned Living and Learning Pod. The physical library space will be available for use by students outside of the assigned pod at designated times with specific COVID protocols that adhere to the capacity limit, physical distancing, and operation guidelines set forth by the [Safety and Healthy Return to Campus Guidelines](#).
- k. Athletics: Sterling College will alter our athletic offerings to comply with state and federal safety guidance, in addition to sports-specific guidance for college level sports, which is forthcoming. All collegiate sports traveling from or to Vermont will comply with the state's cross state travel guidance and quarantine requirements. No spectators are allowed at competitions.
- l. Performing Arts: Only performing arts that allow for social distancing will occur. Any performances shall comply with ACCD guidance on events. Additionally, the Office of Student Life will work closely with the Student Activities Committee to ensure that student events allow for social distancing and comply with [ACCD event guidance](#).
- m. Transportation: The State of Vermont expects that private charter buses and large multi-passenger vans should only be used if density is reduced to allow for social distancing. This includes reducing capacity to 50 percent, leaving every other seat empty, and every other row open. Face coverings must be worn.

Sterling will, therefore, take the following precautions that support its approach to Living & Learning Pods (LLP) to avoid prolonged exposure:

- Preferably, only student members of the same **residential** LLP will travel in a Sterling vehicle at the same time. No face masks required.
  - When the driver is **not** a member of the **residential** LLP being transported, the passenger seat and first row of the van will be left vacant or used for storage. Face mask required for everyone.
  - When any passenger is **not** a member of the **residential** LLP being transported, occupancy will be reduced by 50% and everyone will wear masks.
  - When both practical and safe, windows should be open to increase ventilation.
  - After use, all surfaces in the vehicle must be wiped down with antibacterial wipes found in the Sterling vehicle.
  - In emergency circumstances, where the above policies create additional risk to driver or passengers, safety measures take precedence.
- n. Protect At-Risk Faculty, Staff and Students: We are implementing strategies and policies to address the needs of faculty, staff and students who have underlying health issues.
- o. Multi-household Gatherings: As of the writing of this guidance, the State of Vermont prohibits multi-household social gatherings ([Addendum 8](#)). Should this change during the semester, this guidance will be amended. Because data shows that between October 1, 2020, and November 13th, 2020, 71% of the cases in Vermont associated with an outbreak are associated with a private party or social gathering, attendance at all public and private social, recreational and entertainment gatherings, indoor and outdoor, including large social gatherings incidental to ceremonies, holiday gatherings, parties and celebrations, shall be limited to participation with only members of a single household. Social gatherings do not include dining operations, library operations, in-person classes, religious gatherings, college affiliated athletics, and institutional programming that is conducted in a way that restricts interactions between households.

For Residential Students, your 'household' unit consists of the individual(s) you choose to be '[close-contacts](#)' with (i.e. not wear face coverings, not maintain social distancing). Because of the high-risk nature of congregate living, you are only able to maintain ONE of the following:

- Be '[close-contacts](#)' with your residential podmates. Do not need to maintain social distance or wear face coverings when interacting with residential pod-mates, who are considered part of your 'household' unit.
- Be '[close-contact](#)' with ONE individual outside of your residential pod. Do not need to maintain social distance or wear face coverings when interacting

with the *one individual* outside of your residential pod, as this individual would be considered your 'household' unit.

If you are a residential student who chooses to be a close-contact with *ONE* individual outside of your residential pod, you need to inform your Community Advisor or Work Advisor *AND* your instructor(s) so they can make the appropriate arrangements and accommodations to ensure COVID compliance in the residential hall and in the classroom.

3. Quickly identify individuals with COVID-19 and put containment procedures in place to minimize the impact on students, staff and education.
  - a. Adequate Health Services: Sterling College will be extending services provided by the Wellness Service staffed by a full-time nurse to help coordinate Sterling's COVID-19 response plan and to coordinate care to students in quarantine and isolation. Additionally, the Wellness Center will assist students in coordinating health and wellness resources either through telehealth or in person. Students will be able to visit the Director of Wellness Services by appointment in person or via telehealth. Each LLP will have robust first aid kits that will be maintained by CAs to make sure supplies are replenished. Students are strongly encouraged to bring medication, such as flu medicine, pain relief, upon arrival to campus.
  - b. Isolation Procedures: Sterling College has both an isolation and quarantine plan in place in the event of a positive test and multiple exposures. This includes having an arrangement in place to accommodate 5 percent of the college on-campus population in isolation and/or quarantine.
  - c. Campus Contingency Plans: Sterling College has developed a procedure in the event the Department of Health determines there is an outbreak on campus. This procedure includes remote learning and quarantining portions or all of the campus.
  - d. Contact Tracing: In the event of a positive case, Sterling College will work with the Vermont Department of Health to coordinate and conduct contact tracing.
4. Procedures and protocol for Sterling College's Kentucky Campus. The state of Kentucky has not released official guidance for colleges or universities at this time. The Wendell Berry Farming Program in New Castle, KY will adhere to Kentucky's [Healthy at Work](#) guidelines as well as the guidance that is outlined above. In the event that the states of Vermont and Kentucky's guidelines contradict one another, Kentucky's guidelines will supersede Vermont's [Safe and Health Return to Campus Plan](#). Specific guidance for Wendell Berry Farming Programing students is as follows:

- a. Arrival and Quarantine: All students who are arriving to campus from out-of-state will be required to quarantine as outlined in section 1b of this guidance.
- b. Testing: When Wendell Berry Farming Program residential students arrive in Kentucky from out of state (TBD), they are expected to take a COVID-19 test within 24 to 48 hours of arrival at a [location that administers PCR tests](#). WBFP administrators are working with the Henry County Health Department to provide all WBFP students with required tests on day zero and day seven. Students are expected to have the first round of test results prior to the first in-person class meeting, February 1. Additional Kentucky testing centers; they are [listed here](#) and [here](#).
- c. Visitors: In Kentucky, no outside visitors will be allowed in residence halls. Employees and non-resident students will follow strict protocols for facilities uses that are within residential hall space. Class visitors are permitted with WBFP Dean approval as outlined in section 1d of this guideline.
- d. Travel: As of December 14, 2020, [there is a travel advisory in effect in Kentucky](#). For the safety of our campus community, any out of state travel, other than essential travel to border states, will require a 14 day quarantine. Individuals have the option to end their quarantine early if they receive a negative COVID test result after day seven of quarantine. The state offers the following guidance for those who must travel:
  - Frequently washing your hands with soap and water.
  - Covering your coughs and sneezes.
  - Avoiding close contact with others.
  - Staying home if you feel sick.
- e. Residential Halls: The residential hall facility at the Wendell Berry Farming Program has limited a shared-use space with residential students, commuter students, and employees. Strict facilities use protocols will be followed for the shared-use areas of the residence hall.
- f. Dining Services: Kentucky residential students will continue to provide their own dining services and will follow strict cleaning protocols for kitchen facilities.
- g. Containment Procedures: Identify residential students who are positive for COVID-19 and utilize [CDC guidelines](#) for isolating a person who lives in shared housing. Kentucky guidelines for [contact tracing](#) will be utilized. Regional health services outlined in the [Student Handbook](#) will be available.

