

# HIGHER EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS: SAFELY LAUNCHING ACADEMIC YEAR 2020

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Note: For the purpose of this FAQ document, “Higher Education in Illinois: Safely Launching Academic Year 2020” will be referenced as the “IBHE Guidance.”

### Health and Safety

#### **What are the basic health and safety guidelines for institutions of higher education (IHE)?**

The IBHE Guidance is a tool to help campus leaders in planning and decision-making. There are some baseline practices as outlined in Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Centers of Disease Control (CDC) Guidance:

1. Use face coverings (masks);
2. Prohibit more than 50 individuals from gathering in one space;
3. Observe social distancing of 6 feet as much as possible;
4. Increase cleaning and disinfection;
5. Practice hand hygiene: frequent handwashing and hand sanitizing; and
6. Ensure isolation for individuals who have symptoms, or self-quarantine for someone who has been exposed to an individual that has tested positive for COVID-19 or has traveled in a high-risk area as defined by the CDC.

#### **Are face shields permitted as face coverings instead of masks?**

Face coverings means masks. Face shields should not be used in lieu of masks, except as outlined below for limited instructional reasons.

Face shields have not been deemed effective for source control and are only to be used when other methods of protection are not available or appropriate.

In cases where individuals need facial visualization for instruction and communication, IDPH recommends video instruction to promote social distancing. If video instruction is not available or appropriate, face shields may be used with the understanding that they have not been deemed effective for source control. As such, heightened attention and adherence to 6-foot social distancing is critical for individuals using face shields. Examples of limited situations when face shields may be necessary, if video instruction is not possible, include teachers of English Learners or world languages, whose students may need to see their mouths form words to facilitate language acquisition or in other situations to meet ADA requirements.

#### **Are institutions required to resume on-campus operations in Phase Four?**

The decision to resume on-campus operations rests with the institution.

## **Should institutions of higher education implement universal testing for all students, faculty, and staff if on-campus operations resume?**

On June 30, 2020, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued [Interim Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education Administrators for SARS-CoV-2 Testing](#). Currently, the CDC does not recommend entry testing of all returning students, faculty, and staff. Testing is recommended for individuals who have had contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and in other situations outlined in the CDC guidance for institutions of higher education.

The CDC will update these considerations as needed and as additional information becomes available. Please check the [CDC website](#) periodically for updated interim guidance.

## **Will IBHE Guidance change over time?**

Yes. As new information and guidance is provided by the CDC or IDPH, the IBHE Guidance will evolve. IHEs should check for updates.

## **What happens if conditions worsen, requiring the state or region to return to a previous phase of *Restore Illinois*?**

IHEs should make plans to ensure continuity of learning in the event that it is necessary for the State of Illinois or a particular Health Region to return to an earlier Phase.

## **Educating About Health and Safety Practices**

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### **How can institutions encourage students to follow health and safety guidelines for wearing masks, practicing social distancing, and hand hygiene?**

IHEs should work with campus governance structures to make changes to their codes of conduct regarding their expectations and communicate them clearly to students, faculty, and staff. IHEs should implement training and messaging strategies to encourage the campus community to follow IDPH and CDC safety practices.

IHEs should also post signs widely across campus in common areas, bathrooms, classrooms, etc. with reminders of proper health and safety protocols.

Please refer to the [IBHE Guidance, Section: Health, Safety, and Social Responsibility Training for Students, Faculty, and Staff](#).

### **What resources exist to help institutions communicate their expectations for health and safety protocols to the campus community?**

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has created a host of [posters](#), [social media graphics](#), and [other resources](#) available for printing. For resources specific to areas such as [dining halls](#), [meeting rooms](#), [theaters](#), and [fitness centers](#), see area-specific guidance. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also provide [free materials for download](#).

## Space Capacity and Group Size

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### **What is meant by groups of 50 people in a space? What if an indoor space can hold more than 50 people and maintain social distancing?**

Individual rooms and spaces must limit capacity to 50 people with social distancing. However, larger spaces may be partitioned with fire code-approved floor to ceiling dividers to create additional rooms, each with a capacity limit of 50 people with social distancing.

### **There is no category in the IBHE Guidance for student unions or libraries. What is the guidance for those campus spaces?**

These campus spaces should follow the guidance outlined for classrooms/auditoriums and other spaces where it is possible to socially distance. The maximum number of individuals in the room should not exceed 50 people. However, larger spaces may be partitioned with fire code-approved floor to ceiling dividers to create additional rooms, each with a capacity limit of 50 people with social distancing.

### **What guidance should theatre and music events at institutions of higher education follow?**

These venues fall under DCEO's guidance for theatres and performing arts centers, with indoor venues limited to 50 people or fewer or 50% of capacity, **whichever is less**. Outdoor venues should operate at 20% of capacity. Click here for full DCEO guidance: <https://dceocovid19resources.com/restore-illinois/restore-illinois-phase-4/theaters-and-performing-arts/>.

### **Can there be groups of more than 50 people for outdoor events?**

Yes. As long as there is social distancing within the group and a minimum of 30 feet of space between each group, outdoor events can be held with multiple groups of 50 people.

### **Under Phase Four, can collegiate football be played?**

Please refer to the Guidance outlined by the appropriate collegiate division. For NCAA Divisions I, II, and III, please visit <http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/coronavirus-covid-19> (resources at the bottom of the page).

### **Are spectators allowed at outdoor sports events? What about indoor sports events?**

Spectators are permitted at outdoor sports events, consistent with DCEO's guidance on [Outdoor Seated Spectator Events](#) for Phase 4.

The only spectators permitted at indoor sporting events are players' families and those within their family or household unit. The maximum number of spectators is 50.

### **Under Phase Four, what are the guidelines for office space for employees (students, faculty, and staff)?**

Please follow [DCEO's guidelines for non-customer facing office spaces](#).

### **What does the IBHE Guidance say about shared bathroom spaces in residence halls, and what is the guidance for cleaning these spaces?**

Shared bathroom spaces, like all high-touch areas, require frequent cleaning and disinfecting, consistent with CDC and IDPH guidelines. In addition, in the case of individual or suite-style bathrooms where residents have

primary cleaning responsibility, signs should be posted to remind students of proper cleaning procedures. See [IBHE Guidance](#), Section Residential Life, Phase Four

## Instructional Considerations

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### **The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recommends that classroom desks face the same way in a classroom. Does the IBHE have similar guidance?**

Because higher education instructional settings vary, the IBHE guidance indicates that IHEs should consider measures to ensure social distancing depending on the features of the space and learning methods. Considerations should be given to using floor markings, staggered furniture arrangements, and additional space between lecterns and student seats.

### **What if a classroom space has fixed furniture and does not allow for social distancing?**

Please refer to [IBHE Guidance](#), Section: Completion of labs, clinical, and other performance/demonstration skills:

- In close instructional lab/demonstration settings where it is impossible to social distance, instruction should be planned wherever possible such that students and instructors are placed in static groups to reduce as much as possible their exposure to different people.
- Face coverings and hand hygiene, consistent with CDC and IDPH guidelines, will be practiced.
- Institutions may adopt a “checklist” including possible items as symptom and temperature checks that students and instructors would use to self-certify their health status prior to entering the setting.

### **Can clinical and field experience activities resume in Phase 4?**

Clinical and field experience activities may resume as the hosting site permits. Virtual and simulation activities may be options for those sites restricting in-person clinical or field experiences. Please consult all regulatory and accrediting agencies for additional guidance.

### **Does the guidance define online instruction?**

No. However, should your institution be subject to IBHE’s 23 Illinois Administrative Code 1030 or 1050, please refer to the *Requirements for Technologically Mediated Instruction Offered at a Distance* as detailed below:

- Private independent and out-of-state institutions ([Ill. admin. code tit. 23, § 1030.30 \(a\)\(3\)\(h\), 2017](#)).
- Public four-year institutions. ([Ill. Admin. Code tit. 23, § 1050.30 \(b\)\(1\)\(j\), 2017](#)).

Additionally, please refer to your institutional accreditor’s policies and procedures for online instruction.

### **Does IBHE require notification if an institution chooses to continue with remote delivery for its programs?**

All private business and vocational schools (PBVS) approved by the IBHE currently must obtain authorization prior to changing the mode of delivery for approved programs/courses as outlined in the Private Business and Vocational Schools Act of 2012 (“PBVS Act”) (105 ILCS 426 et seq.) and Illinois Administrative Rules (23 Illinois Administrative Code 1095). However, in the interest of public health and safety, the IBHE is temporarily allowing PBVS to offer alternative instruction methods if the PBVS deems online instruction or temporary closure of the institution is necessary through December 31, 2020.

## About Guidance

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### **What happens if an institution of higher education is not following the guidance by IBHE or the State of Illinois?**

The *Restore Illinois* plan serves as the overall framework for the State of Illinois. This [IBHE Guidance](#) is meant to aid IHEs in interpreting *Restore Illinois* in the context of higher education. Institutions should use the guidance to inform their decision-making but each institution's decisions are its own.

### **Does IBHE have guidance on waivers for liability due to COVID-19?**

Each institution of higher education should consult with their own legal counsel and risk managers.

### **Do IHEs have to submit their opening plans to the Illinois Board of Higher Education?**

IBHE does not require that institutions of higher education submit opening and operational plans.

### **The IBHE Guidance for Opening Higher Education for Academic Year 2020 refers to the State's plan, *Restore Illinois*. Where can I find out more information about *Restore Illinois*?**

Please visit this link to read more about [Restore Illinois](#).

### **How long is this Guidance in effect?**

*Restore Illinois* has specific information for each phase. This [IBHE Guidance](#) is in effect as long as Illinois is operating under the *Restore Illinois* plan.

### **Where can I find more information about Business and Industry Guidance for the State of Illinois?**

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has issued Business and Industry Guidance, please visit [this link](#).