

# NEW MEXICO HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM  
GOVERNOR



INTERIM AGENCY AUTHORITY  
STEPHANIE RODRIGUEZ  
RICKY SERNA

September 14, 2020

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** New Mexico Higher Education Institution Presidents, Chancellors and Administrators  
**FROM:** Stephanie Rodriguez, Interim Agency Authority, New Mexico Higher Education Department  
**CC:** Ricky Serna, Interim Agency Authority, New Mexico Higher Education Department  
**RE:** Updated COVID-19 Response at New Mexico Higher Education Institutions

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New Mexico's higher education institutions have been diligently working to provide a mix of remote and essential hybrid or in-person classes, service operations and research efforts this Fall Semester. The Office of the Governor and the [New Mexico Higher Education Department](#) (Department) have worked with you to ensure institutions reopen campuses utilizing a measured approach to reduce COVID-19 spread and transmissions.

This memo provides updated guidance to colleges and universities to initiate a seamless reporting and response system among our state agencies – the Department, the [New Mexico Department of Health](#) (NMDOH) and the [New Mexico Environment Department](#) (NMED).

All guidance from the [State of New Mexico](#) (State) and the Department has been focused on three guiding principles:

1. Prioritizing the health and safety of students, faculty, staff members and the community at large;
2. Maximizing the number of safe learning opportunities; and
3. Instituting guidance and decisions based on science, data and modeling.

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has directed the State's three education agencies to guide all sectors in ensuring schools have adequate support systems and technical assistance in the event of a positive COVID-19 case. The Department will assist your college or university with properly reporting to the State, initializing contact tracing and rapid response, and cleaning and sanitizing protocols.

### Positive COVID-19 Case(s) on Campus

New Mexico's higher education institutions have laid the foundation for collaborating with a regional medical provider and/or a NMDOH Public Health Office to better prepare for testing and rapid response efforts. Additionally, all colleges and universities have designated a campus point of contact to assist the State in these efforts. The contact information for your institution's designated point of contact has been shared with pertinent staff at the Department, NMDOH and NMED.

The Department will be your institution's main point of contact for questions and support. Institutions may utilize the Department to facilitate expedited support and resources from state agencies such as NMDOH and NMED when it is appropriate to do so, e.g., rapid response in partnership with a NMDOH Public Health Office within your region.

### ***Reporting Positive COVID-19 Cases among Student Employees, Faculty and Staff Members***

If a student employee (including a student conducting work study), faculty or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, [NMED's emergency amendment](#) requires higher education institutions to report the case to the Occupational Health and Safety Bureau's new [web portal](#) within four hours of learning of the positive case(s).

- Occupational Health and Safety Bureau, New Mexico Environment Department
  - Website: <https://nmgov.force.com/rapidresponse/s/>

Please send a separate email to the Department as well.

- To: Office of the Secretary, New Mexico Higher Education Department
  - Email: [NMHED.COVID@state.nm.us](mailto:NMHED.COVID@state.nm.us)

### ***Reporting Positive COVID-19 Cases within the Student Population***

If a student tests positive (whether it is a student residing on or off campus), you must report the case to the Department via email.

- To: Office of the Secretary, New Mexico Higher Education Department
  - Email: [NMHED.COVID@state.nm.us](mailto:NMHED.COVID@state.nm.us)

### ***Reporting Information***

The following information must be included when reporting a positive case:

- Name of the higher education institution
- Address, city, state and zip code of the higher education institution
- Employer representative contact, email and telephone number
- Number of people employed and number of students enrolled at the higher education institution
- Number of individuals who tested positive
- Identifier for the positive COVID-19 case(s)
  - Example: Student (on-campus resident, off-campus resident, student athlete and/or student employee), faculty or staff member
  - Please **do not** include names or personally identifiable information.
- Date of COVID-19 test(s)
- Date each positive individual was last on campus
- Date each positive individual began to self-quarantine

Please use the [template from the Department's website](#) and attach it to the email to the State's agencies.

The Department will contact a designated employee at your higher education institution to discuss the full scope of the case(s). Questions and considerations will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Does it constitute a rapid response?
  - A rapid response may require the immediate closure of facilities and testing of individuals.
- What facilities did the individual(s) visit on campus?

- Based on the answer, we will discuss proper [cleaning and sanitizing protocols](#).
- Are impacted individuals self-quarantining or isolating?

In addition, the designated employee(s) on your campus will be contacted by one or both of the following divisions from NMDOH to complete their investigations related to a positive case:

- Contact Tracing Division, New Mexico Department of Health
  - To learn more about contact tracing, click [here](#).
- Epidemiology and Response Division (ERD), New Mexico Department of Health
  - To view ERD's *Policies for the Prevention and Control of COVID-19 in New Mexico*, click [here](#). This guide establishes an overview of policies and procedures for containing COVID-19. Additional technical resources are included for healthcare providers, businesses and employers responsible for protecting the general public against the spread of COVID-19.

## Questions

If you have any questions, please contact the Department at [NMHED.COVID@state.nm.us](mailto:NMHED.COVID@state.nm.us). The email is monitored regularly and a representative will respond promptly.