

# THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASE POLICY

### Number

Division Academic Affairs

Date OCT 29, 2014-revised March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016

### Purpose

**Purpose.** The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the effective and appropriate management of issues relating to communicable diseases affecting members of the campus community at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (“UAH” or the “University”) with the goal of providing a safe learning, working, and living environment for all UAH students, employees and visitors.

The policy provides a framework for assessing risks related to communicable diseases and makes recommendation regarding a response to such risk(s), educating the community about such risk(s), and for facilitating other preventive measures.

**Scope.** This policy applies to all University students (including those enrolled in Continuing Education classes), faculty and staff employees (whether part-time or full-time), and all on-site contract workers (i.e., food service workers, hotel staff, etc.) and visitors (as defined under the Definitions section of this policy).

### **Definitions.**

**A 1 Communicable Disease:** Any disease that can be spread (transmitted) directly from one person to another. A disease that can spread very quickly and easily from person to person by means of contact or close proximity is a contagious disease. An infectious disease is an illness caused by germs or organisms, such as bacteria, viruses, etc. While not every disease is contagious or communicable (e.g. food poisoning), some are (e.g. influenza). This policy is concerned with those infectious diseases that are highly communicable or contagious, posing a significant risk of transmission in a university setting and that pose a significant threat to the life or health of others. All references to “communicable diseases” herein are to be understood as having that more restricted meaning.

**A 2** Certain communicable diseases can be prevented if adequately vaccinated; such as rubella (German measles), measles, mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), influenza. Other communicable diseases such as tuberculosis (TB), and Ebola currently do not have vaccines.

**B. Employee:** Any full- or part-time employee of the University, including, but not limited

to: exempt and non-exempt staff, faculty, adjunct faculty, GAs, GRAs, GTAs, student workers, and leased and contract employees.

**C. Student:** Any individual enrolled at the University in any of the recognized admission categories (undergraduate, graduate, continuing education, etc.) and currently taking courses on a full- or part-time basis.

**D. Visitor:** Any non-employee or non-student present on the University campus or at any University-controlled location for any purpose, business or personal. This includes both invited and uninvited guests.

**E. Medically-confirmed diagnosis:** A medical diagnosis performed by a licensed health care provider based on information from sources including but not limited to a physical examination, interview with the individual or family or both, medical history of the individual and family, and/or clinical findings as reported by laboratory tests and radiologic studies.

## **General Policies**

**A. Basis for University Actions.** In dealing with the presence of a communicable disease on campus, the University will seek to protect the rights, safety, and well-being of the University community at large as well as individuals within that community. In its actions, the University will be guided by medical advice that is current and well-informed and by the circumstances presented by each case; including the campus population that is already protected via vaccination. The University is also committed to complying with federal and state laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Family and Medical Leave Act, etc., regarding rights of individuals with a communicable disease, including the right not to be subjected to unlawful discrimination.

**B. Other University Policies.** This policy will be interpreted and implemented in a manner that is consistent with applicable University student and employment policies regarding illness and disability.

**C. Outreach.** When a communicable disease threat has been identified, the University will develop and maintain educational programs and outreach to provide students and employees information about communicable diseases to which they may be at risk. These programs and outreach efforts will endeavor to utilize the most current medical and scientific information available, and they will address both contagion information and prevention measures, such as vaccinations.

**D. Testing and Medical Care Resources.** The University will identify and provide information to students and employees about sources of competent and confidential testing for communicable diseases, as well as for counseling. The University will further identify sources of qualified medical care for communicable diseases and encourage those with such diseases to utilize such sources.

**E. Individualized Approach.** Decisions involving students, employees, or visitors with communicable diseases will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the medical facts presented as well as the need to maintain confidentiality and to serve the best interests of all parties involved.

**F. Implementation Responsibility.** The UAH Communicable Diseases Management Team (CDMT), in consultation with the Office of Dean of Students (for student concerns), Office of Academic Affairs (for faculty concerns) and/or Human Resources (for staff concerns), and with guidance from the Office of Counsel, shall officially interpret and implement this Policy and shall revise or modify it as necessary to meet the changing needs of the University. (See Section H for CDMT Composition).

**G. CDMT Membership.** The CDMT will be composed of regular members who will participate on an ongoing basis with respect to general committee activities and functions, and ad hoc members who will be added to the committee as needed to assist with committee functions and activities in addressing a specific communicable disease case.

1. Regular members (11 members):

- A medical professional from the Faculty/Staff Clinic, appointed by the Dean of the College of Nursing (Chair)
- Dean of Students/Associate Vice President for Student Affairs (Co-Chair)
- A medical professional from the Student Health Center, appointed by the Dean of Students
- Provost or designee from within Academic Affairs (if any student or faculty member is involved)
- Representative from Faculty Senate
- Director of the Counseling Center
- An attorney from the UAH Office of Counsel, appointed by the Chief University Counsel
- President's Chief of Staff
- Chief of Police
- Director, Environmental Health and Safety
- Emergency Management Coordinator

2. Ad hoc members:

- Vice President for Student Affairs (if a student is involved)
- Assistant Vice President for Human Resources (if any staff member is involved)
- Director of University Housing and Residence Life (if a student is involved and he/she lives on campus, and/or if employee is involved and he/she works in Housing)
- Director of Athletics (if student athlete is involved)
- Director of Office of International Engagement (if international students, faculty, staff, or visitors are involved)

## **Specific Policies**

**A. Personal Protective Equipment.** In the event of possible exposure to blood and other body fluids, students and employees must use appropriate personal protective equipment, provided by the University, to prevent contact with blood and other body fluids in accordance with guidelines and universal precautions established by the U.S. Public Health Service, in accordance with requirements established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) as published in 29 CFR 1910.1030, and in accordance with the University's Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Plan.

**B. Immunization.** The University requires students, certain employees, and visitors to have completed immunizations in accordance with the University's Immunization Policy. The University's Immunization Policy delineates all required vaccinations. The University will further publicize and, where feasible, assist with the administration of optional immunizations and vaccines for members of the campus community.

**C. International Travel Requirements.** Any student or employee who travels on a University related business trip to an area designated by the CDC as a country of high risk for communicable disease infection may be required to submit to appropriate screening for that disease(s) within CDC recommended screening guidelines. Any student or employee traveling on non-university related trips to an area identified by the CDC as high risk is expected and encouraged to self-report to the appropriate campus health clinic and submit to screening prior to returning to campus. The decision for testing will be made following CDC guidelines within the Student Health Clinic (for students) and the Faculty and Staff Clinic (for employees). The CDMT will assist in helping faculty and staff understand the guidelines.

**D. Confidentiality.** All medical information and records about an individual will be treated as private and confidential and will be handled in compliance with legal requirements, including those set forth in the Health Insurance and Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), with applicable University policies, and with professional ethical standards.

1. The University will implement and maintain procedural safeguards to protect the privacy interests of persons in the campus community who have a communicable disease.
2. The University will not disclose the identity of any employee or student who has a communicable disease, except as authorized or required by law; except as may be necessary, on a "need to know" basis, for the administration of this policy; and except as is consistent with University policy.
3. The University's Office of Counsel shall be the custodian of CDMT records, both electronic and hardcopy. Records shall be maintained in accordance with applicable State and Federal records retention requirements and with existing University records retention policies.

## **Procedures**

**A. Reporting Requirements.** The University will comply with legal requirements regarding the reporting of communicable diseases. See § 22-11A-1 et seq., Alabama Code (1975, as amended) (reporting of notifiable diseases and health conditions) and Alabama Department of Public Health, Rule 420-4-1 Appendix I - Alabama Notifiable Diseases/Conditions.

**B. Notification.**

1. Any person who has a reasonable basis to believe that a member of the campus community (a student or a faculty or staff employee, or a visitor) has a communicable disease that could potentially pose a significant threat to the health of others will report that information to the CDMT. This duty to report applies to the infected individual as well.

2. Upon receiving such a report, the CDMT will meet as soon as is practicable.

**C. Infected Individual - Responsible Action.** A University individual who knows, or has reason to believe, he or she has a communicable disease is expected to obtain expert advice from a licensed health care provider about the known or suspected health condition and, if indicated, to obtain follow-up treatment. Such individual is obligated, ethically and legally, to conduct himself/herself responsibly in light of such knowledge, so as to protect other members of the University community.

**D. Restrictions – Authorities to Impose and Rescind.** This Policy authorizes the Vice President for Finance and Administration (for staff-related incidents and incidents involving visitors) and the Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (for faculty- and student-related incidents) to impose health-related restrictions and to remove such restrictions when an infected individual meets the requirements set forth in the section below. Such restrictions may be based upon recommendations from the CDMT.

**E. Infected Individuals - Restrictions.**

1. A University employee who, based on a medically confirmed diagnosis, is known to have or, based on reasonable evidence, is suspected of having a communicable disease may be excluded from the workplace and will be granted emergency leave in accordance with UAH employee leave policies and CDC guidelines until the requirements stated in Paragraph F below are satisfied.

2. A University student who, based on a medically confirmed diagnosis, is known to have or, based on reasonable evidence, is suspected of having a communicable disease may be subjected to certain limitations until the requirements stated in Paragraph F below are satisfied. Such limitations may include restricting the student from attending classes, from obtaining meals in UAH dining facilities, and may be assigned to different campus residence facilities.

3. A visitor to the UAH campus, who, based on a medically confirmed diagnosis, is known to have, or, based on reasonable evidence, is suspected of having a communicable disease may be subjected to certain limitations until the requirements stated in Paragraph F below are satisfied. Such limitations may include restricting an individual from attending University-sanctioned functions, restricting entry to campus residential and food service areas, etc.

4. Such limitations must be based on a medically confirmed diagnosis of a communicable disease and a medical judgment that the limitations are necessary or appropriate for the health or welfare of the infected individual (e.g., a student requires care that cannot reasonably be provided in the University housing setting) and/or the health or welfare of other members of the University community (e.g., an employee is contagious or is demonstrating behaviors that place others at risk). Such limitations should also be included in the recommendations developed by the CDMT after its review of the circumstances involved in a specific communicable disease case.

**F. Return to Work or School.** Before limitations imposed on an individual student, employee, or visitor who has been diagnosed as having a communicable disease can be removed, the individual must present a written statement from the attending physician or the Huntsville-Madison County Health Department indicating that the individual is no longer contagious and, as of a specified date, is able to return to work and carry out the essential functions of the job (in the case of an employee) or is able to return to classes and carry out normal academic and campus activities (in the case of a student).

**G. Reporting Line.** The CDMT will have an administrative reporting line to the President of the University during normal University operations. The CDMT will report to the designated University Incident Commander in the event the University's Emergency Management Operations Group has been activated as a result of a community-wide communicable disease threat.

**H.** The CDMT will direct its recommendations regarding restrictions to the following University administrators: Vice President for Finance and Administration for recommendations affecting staff employees and Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs for recommendations affecting faculty and/or students. These officials are vested in the section below of this Policy with the authority to impose restrictions.

**I. Chair.** The President will appoint the Chair or Co-Chair of the CDMT. The Chairs or their designee will, together and in coordination with the President's Chief of Staff, serve as the University spokes-persons to the public for all matters relating to the management of a campus situation involving a communicable disease.

**J. Authority.** The CDMT is vested with the authority to act on behalf of the University and in the interests of campus public health and safety to investigate communicable disease reports

and recommend courses of action relating to the prevention and/or containment of reported communicable disease threats. Based on this responsibility, it has a recognized interest in and right to know about employee and/or student health information pertaining to a communicable disease.

The CDMT does not prescribe medical treatment nor shall it have authority to act outside of established University chains of command.

**K. Duties.** The objective of the CDMT is to help prevent or contain a communicable disease outbreak and reduce the risk of future, adverse health-related occurrences resulting from a communicable disease. To carry out that objective, the CDMT will use a case-management based approach to respond to reports of communicable diseases affecting the University. That approach shall guide the process from the initial information gathering stage to the making of assessments and to the planning and recommending of actions, strategies, policies, and practices. These duties will be carried out without delay.

The CDMT will have the following specific functions and responsibilities:

1. Receive information about individuals within the UAH community who have, or who are suspected of having, a communicable disease, or about a situation in which there is a significant risk of infection of members of the campus community.
2. The CDMT will evaluate immunization status of faculty, staff, and students.
2. If appropriate under the circumstances, investigate the potential source of the disease, so as to identify campus members who may have been or may be exposed.
3. Be informed about developments concerning the particular communicable disease and the medical, biological, legal, financial, and public relations facts and issues that are pertinent to the disease and the situation presented to the University.
4. Obtain the most current recommendations about the management and prevention of the spread of the disease and, if appropriate, request vaccines and/or medications. Request additional professional and clerical assistance if deemed necessary.
5. Advise and make recommendations to the University, as appropriate and as outlined in this Policy, concerning educational programs and prevention measures relating to the communicable disease that may be undertaken by the University for the benefit of the campus community. If deemed appropriate under the circumstances, provide education to the campus community about how to identify and report any signs and symptoms of the disease.
6. Advise and make recommendations to the University, as necessary and appropriate and where legally permitted, to protect the health of other members of the University community who may be at risk from the infected individual and to protect the

legal rights of the known or suspected infected individual. This may include the identification of recommended restrictions to be imposed on the known or suspected infected individual and the removal of such restrictions.

7. Provide information and education about the disease, to the extent deemed necessary and consistent with confidentiality considerations, to co-workers, roommates, classmates, etc. of the infected individual.

8. Assure that a person known or suspected to have a communicable disease is encouraged to seek appropriate medical treatment and counseling.

9. Notify the Alabama Public Health Department about the disease, if it is listed in Alabama Department of Public Health, Rule 420-4-1 Appendix I - Alabama Notifiable Diseases/Conditions.

10. Advise and make recommendations to the University regarding the communication of information to the public and the media.

11. Coordinate with appropriate city, county, and state officials regarding screening for and the reporting and management of communicable diseases. With respect to a specific case, the committee may seek the latest recommendation about ways to manage and prevent the spread of the communicable disease, may request appropriate vaccines and/or medications, and may request additional professional and clerical assistance, if deemed necessary.

12. Provide to the University President, through the Office of Counsel, an annual summary report of CDMT activities and incidences of communicable diseases affecting the University. This report will be made available to the UAH community upon request.

**L. Related Policies and Resources.** This policy will be interpreted and implemented in a manner that is consistent with applicable University student and employee policies and applicable government directives regarding illness and disability. Related documents include:

- UAH Campus Safety Guide – <http://safety.uah.edu>
- UAH Faculty Handbook – <http://www.uah.edu/faculty-senate/resources/164-facsen/2212-faculty-handbook>
- UAH Staff Handbook – <http://www.uah.edu/images/administrative/human-resources/StaffHandbook.pdf>
- UAH Student Handbook – <http://www.uah.edu/student-support/student-conduct/handbook>
- UAH Emergency Procedures Handbook – <http://www.uah.edu/facilities-and-operations/oep/plans>



- UAH Emergency Management Plan – <http://www.uah.edu/facilities-and-operations/oepp/plans>
- UAH Student Health Center Immunization Information – <http://www.uah.edu/health-and-wellness/student-health-center/immunizations>
- UAH Immunization Policy – <http://www.uah.edu/health-and-wellness/student-health-center/immunizations>
- UAH Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan: <http://www.uah.edu/oehs?id=7692>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- Alabama Department of Public Health [www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)

**M. Contacts.**

- Human Resources: 256-824-6545
- Academic Affairs Office: 256-824-6335
- Office of Dean of Students: 256-824-6700
- Faculty & Staff Clinic: 256-824-2100
- Student Health Center: 256-824-6775

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the CDMT, or more frequently if organization or situational changes warrant.

**Approval**

Chief University Counsel		Date
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs		Date
Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration		Date
Vice President for University Advancement		Date

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Vice President for Diversity

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Date

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Vice President for Research

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Date

**APPROVED:**

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President

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Date