

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE POLICY

Number 02.01.51

Division Academic Affairs

Date October 29, 2014; Revised June 2, 2021

Purpose To establish an organized systematic process and 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.

Policy The University recognizes that certain medical threats can jeopardize the health, welfare, and safety of the University community. This policy provides a framework for assessing risks related to communicable diseases and makes recommendations 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 and other non-credit classes), faculty and staff employees (whether full-time, part-time, contractors, or others associated with the university), 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 communicable disease. An infectious disease is an illness caused by germs or organisms, such as bacteria, viruses, etc. While not every disease is communicable (e.g. food poisoning), some are (e.g. influenza). This policy is concerned with those infectious diseases that are highly communicable, posing a significant risk of widespread transmission in a university setting and that pose a significant threat to the life or health of others while either being diseases that (1) federal, Alabama state, or local government have officially

declared a current public health emergency or (2) the CDMT defined later in this policy has declared a university health emergency. All references to “communicable diseases” herein are to be understood as having that more restricted meaning.

A. **2.** Certain communicable diseases such as rubella (German measles), measles, mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), or influenza can be minimized or prevented through vaccination requirements. Other communicable diseases such as tuberculosis (TB, SARS, MERS, and Ebola currently do not have vaccines. COVID-19 vaccines have been approved by the FDA and are being distributed.

B. **Communicable Diseases: Communicable diseases are spread from person to person.** For example, a communicable disease may be spread through direct physical contact like touching the person who has the infection. Another way is when an infectious microbe travels through the air after somebody nearby sneezes or coughs.

C. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Protective clothing, helmets, goggles, masks, or other garments or equipment designed to protect the wearer’s body from injury. PPE may also minimize the risk of spread to others around you.

D. **Pandemic: A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease that usually affects a large number of people.** A pandemic occurs when a new virus emerges for which people have little or no immunity and for which there is no vaccine. The disease spreads easily from person-to-person, causes serious illness or fatality and can spread across the country and around the world in a very short time.

E. **Employee:** Any full-time or part-time employee of the University, including, but not limited to: exempt and non-exempt staff, faculty, part-time faculty, graduate assistants (GAs), graduate research assistants (GRAs), graduate teaching (GTAs), J-Scholars, post-doctoral fellows, student workers, and on-call, temporary, leased and contract employees.

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

G. **Visitor:** Any non-employee, visiting trainee, 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. All invited international visitors to campus should have an International Visitor Form on file with the Office of International Services or Office of Research Security per State and Federal Regulations and outlined in the International Visitor Memo dated 09/03/2019.

H. **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. When circumstances require it, the University will work with state and local public health and other local authorities to institute community containment measures, such as closing and re-opening the University.

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. The University will further identify sources of qualified medical care for communicable diseases and encourage those with such diseases to utilize such sources. In the event of a pandemic, the University will work with the local health department, health care facilities, and testing laboratories to meet the needs of the University community.

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), 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 G 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.

Regular members (12 members):

- Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, co-chair
- Vice President for Student Affairs, co-chair
- Director, Faculty/Staff Clinic
- Director, Student Health Clinic
- Director, Risk Management
- Chief of Police
- Associate Vice President for Human Resources
- Director, Counseling Center
- Director, Environmental Health and Safety
- Representative from SGA
- Representative from Staff Senate
- Faculty Representative chosen by Faculty Senate

Specific Policies

A. **Personal Protection.** In the event of possible exposure to blood and other body fluids and to sources of contagion, students and employees must use appropriate PPE to prevent contact with blood and other body fluids and to prevent exposure in contagious environments 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. In the event of a pandemic, the Faculty and Staff Clinic and Student Health Services will identify critical PPE needed to support a surge in demand and take steps to have those supplies at hand.

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.** Any student, employee, visitor, J1 Scholar, post- doctoral fellow, or invited guest who travels on a University-related business trip to an area identified by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as being impacted by the transmission of a communicable disease may be required to submit to appropriate screening or other more restrictive measures such as self-quarantine for the disease(s) in accordance with CDC recommended guidelines. Any student or employee traveling on non-University related trips to an area identified by the CDC as impacted by the transmission of a communicable disease may be required to self-report to the Faculty & Staff Clinic or Student Health Clinic and submit to appropriate screening or other more restrictive measures such as self-quarantine prior to returning to campus. The decision for testing will be made following CDC guidelines and the Policies on Heightened Risk for Faculty and Staff and Heightened Risk for Students. 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.
4. The University will ensure laboratories to which samples from University employees and students are appropriately certified and that certification requires that any human genetic material from tested individuals will be destroyed after communicable disease testing (and before any other form of testing is done).

E. **Pandemic.** To prepare for the most severe health scenario to affect the campus community – that of a highly infectious and fatal virus entering the United States – the University may do as follows:

1. The University may need to suspend in-person classes and close the campus for some number of weeks or months until the rate of transmission of the virus begins to reasonably subside.
2. The University shall follow guidelines from the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and from the CDC.
3. The decision to suspend in-person classes and close the campus will be made by the President in conjunction with the Chancellor of The University of Alabama System and the Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama and based on the recommendation of the Alabama Department of Public Health, Emergency Management Team, and other appropriate entities.

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 (serious illness or death) 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), the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, and the Vice President for Student Affairs (for faculty-, research staff- 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 and collaborating entities based upon the location of the individuals and the collaborating organization.

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 and obtaining meals in UAH dining facilities, assigning the student to a different campus residence facility or, if a commuter student, asking the student to remain off-campus.

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 a qualified care provider

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). In the event of a pandemic, the decision to resume in-person classes and open campus will be made by the President in conjunction with the Chancellor of The University of Alabama System based on the recommendations of the ADPH, and/or as directed by local, state, or federal authorities.

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.

1. **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 have the authority to impose the recommendations of and restrictions from the CDMT on University staff, faculty and students for the health and welfare of the individuals and of the community.
2. **Co-Chairs.** The Co-Chairs will together and in coordination with the President serve as the University spokespersons to the public for all matters relating to the management of a campus situation involving a communicable disease.
3. **Authority.** In the interest of campus public health and safety, the CDMT is vested with authority 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. In the event of a pandemic, the President will lead and assemble a team to make decisions on behalf of the University and the University community.

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

4. **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, defined as meeting an individual's comprehensive health needs through communication and available resources to promote patient safety, quality of care, and cost-effective outcomes, 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:

- a. 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 such as in the case of a highly contagious disease or pandemic. Information received by CDMT shall have individual identity information removed or anonymized, unless there is a demonstrably strong necessity for the CDMT to have individual names.
- b. The CDMT will evaluate immunization status of faculty, staff, and students.
- c. 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.
- d. 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.
- e. 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.

- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- h. 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. The identities of the infected individual(s) and the co-workers, roommates, classmates, etc. will be held only by a subset of the entire CDMT membership, with that subset of the size necessary to achieve the information and education provision, as determined by the CDMT co-chairs. When it is appropriate, provide information and education to the wider University community about the communicable disease and provide instruction on how to prevent the contagion and how to protect against the communicable disease.
- i. Encourage a person known or suspected to have a communicable disease to seek appropriate medical treatment and counseling.
- j. Notify the ADPH about the disease, if it is listed in ADPH, Rule 420- 4-1 Appendix I - Alabama Notifiable Diseases/Conditions.
- k. Advise and make recommendations to the University regarding the communication of information to the public and the media. Ensure that CDMT makes those recommendations for communication as soon as possible so that the larger University community can take necessary precautions.
- l. 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.

- m. For pandemics, follow the guidance and controls placed upon the University by the ADPH and The University of Alabama System for returning faculty, staff, and students to campus.
- n. 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.

H. **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 –Policy 06.02.01,

<http://www.uah.edu/images/administrative/human-resources/StaffHandbook.pdf>

UAH Student Handbook –Policy 03.03.04,

<http://www.uah.edu/student-support/student-conduct/handbook>

UAH Emergency Procedures Handbook –Policy 01.03.04,

https://www.uah.edu/images/administrative/policies/support-documents/01.03.04_emergency_guidebook.pdf

UAH Emergency Management Plan –Policy 01.03.03,

https://www.uah.edu/images/administrative/policies/support-documents/01.03.03_facilities_and_operations-emergency_management_plan

[pdf](#)

UAH Student Health Center Immunization Information –

<http://www.uah.edu/health-and-wellness/student-health-center/immunizations>

UAH Immunization Policy –Policy 03.03.02,

<http://www.uah.edu/health-and-wellness/student-health-center/immunizations>

UAH Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan: Policy

06.06.20, (<http://www.uah.edu/oehs?id=7692>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov

Alabama Department of Public Health www.adph.org

I. Contacts.

Office of Human Resources: 256-824-6545

Office of Academic Affairs: 256-824-6337

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.

