



Memo: Return to normal operations beginning Fall 2021 semester
Date: July 12, 2021
To: EMCC Faculty, Staff, and Students
From: Scott Alsobrooks, Ph.D.

East Mississippi Community College will return to normal operations effective August 2, 2021. Existing capacity limitations related to COVID-19 campus facilities have been removed. All meeting rooms, classrooms, open facilities, on-campus events, and auditoriums can resume 100% capacity. If we need to revert to initial COVID-19 protocols and practices, we believe, based on our experience this last year, we will be able to do so efficiently as possible. Although we are returning to normal operations, we still urge everyone on campus to protect themselves and others through daily health practices and consider getting the COVID-19 vaccination. Below are some updates to consider as we prepare to return to normal operations.

1. Vaccinations are readily available throughout the state of Mississippi. Accordingly, EMCC encourages students, faculty, and staff to get the COVID-19 vaccination through a healthcare provider of your choice. The MSDH website says: Vaccination offers excellent protection against illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. **All persons aged 12 or older who live or work in Mississippi are eligible for vaccination.** Vaccines are readily available across our communities, and you can find a vaccine by visiting www.vaccines.gov. Local health clinics, physicians, pharmacies, and providers also offer COVID-19 vaccination.
2. We encourage EMCC faculty, staff, and students to get vaccinated at a provider of your choice. We will host free vaccination clinics on campus during the fall semester for those who could not do so. Nurse Amy Ivy will be conducting COVID-19 testing. Nurse Ivy will disseminate testing information via email.
3. In accordance with the Mississippi State Department of Health recommendations issued on Friday, July 9, 2021, due to the rapid increase in delta variant cases and outbreaks, combined with the low overall vaccination rate, EMCC strongly advises all who are unvaccinated to wear a mask when indoors at any EMCC indoor facility. We will continue to monitor data from our six-county service district as this information will help inform our decision on the next steps.
4. Maintain proactive personal health practices, including washing hands frequently with soap and water or hand sanitizer, especially after touching often used items or surfaces;

refraining from touching your face; sneezing or coughing into a tissue or the inside of your elbow; and disinfecting frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.

5. Guidance for exposure as of July 2021 (CDC): If you are fully vaccinated, and it has been 2 or more weeks since your final dose in the vaccine series, and you've been around someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay away from others or get tested unless you have symptoms. Employees and students who are otherwise exposed or test positive for COVID-19 are required to quarantine (for exposure) or isolate (for positive tests).

When to quarantine for exposure:

- People who have been in [close contact](#) with someone who has COVID-19—excluding people who have had COVID-19 within the past 3 months or [who are fully vaccinated](#).
- People who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not have to quarantine or get tested again as long as they do not develop new symptoms.
- People who develop symptoms again within 3 months of their first bout of COVID-19 may need to be tested again if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms.
- People who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 are not required to quarantine if they have been [fully vaccinated](#) against the disease and show no symptoms.

What counts as [close contact](#)?

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- You had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them)
- You shared eating or drinking utensils
- They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you.

Stay home and monitor your health

- Stay home for 14 days after your last contact with a person who has COVID-19.
- Watch for fever (100.4°F), cough, shortness of breath, or [other symptoms](#) of COVID-19
- If possible, stay away from others, especially people who are at [higher risk](#) for getting very sick from COVID-19

For those who have tested positive, you must follow these guidelines.

For those who **tested positive with symptoms,** you can be with others after

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared and
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication and
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.

For those who **tested positive without symptoms,** you can be with others after

- 10 days have passed since the date you had your positive test

- If you develop symptoms after testing positive, follow the guidance above for “I think or know I had COVID, and I had symptoms.”
6. Unless traveling to an area with travel restrictions, all COVID-19 traveling restrictions may return to normal. Individuals should be aware of conditions that exist at their destination as well as their mode of transportation.
 7. EMCC will continue to have temperature stations, sanitization stations, masks, and other resources available to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Those who want or need a mask and additional supplies may contact your respective dean of student’s office.
 8. Students are expected to attend all classes, labs, and clinical as prescribed. Students are solely responsible for keeping up with their attendance. Because of the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and other unknowns, students should try their best to stay up-to-date with their attendance and assignments. If you can’t attend class, communicate with your instructors asap. If circumstances require an absence, then students should note that all absences are either excused or unexcused.
 - Excused absences are those incurred when students miss class due to:
 - a. personal illness;
 - b. immediate family illness;
 - b. death in the family;
 - c. inclement weather;
 - d. officially representing the college;
 - e. serving on jury duty;
 - f. participating in military activities;
 - g. fulfilling approved legal requirements.
 - All other reasons for missing class are considered unexcused, including, but not limited to, transportation problems, work, or vacation. These situations are why students are allowed a certain number of unexcused absences, and these should not be wasted.
 - An instructor reserves the right to verify the validity of an excuse submitted by a student, for example, a doctor’s excuse, legal notes, etc. This documentation must be presented to the instructor at the class meeting following the absence. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.

NOTE: We will continue to monitor information from the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Mississippi State Department of Health and comply with issued mandates.