Ball State University COVID-19 Screening, Testing, and Contact Tracing Protocols

Last Updated August 16, 2021
I. Overview

Having students, employees, and visitors on campus during this pandemic requires Ball State University to continue implementing various procedures and protocols in order to create a safe place to work and learn. In that respect, screening for symptoms of COVID-19, along with testing for the virus, is considered to be of great importance, and the University is engaged in both regular screening and testing to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in our community.

As a result of a Service Agreement with Indiana University Health, the University's Student Health Center is equipped to provide health services, including screening and testing for COVID-19 to currently enrolled students who are symptomatic. Employees should seek medical care from their primary care providers. The Employee Quick Clinic at the Health Center is equipped to provide services in cases where an employee does not have access to a primary care physician.

II. Screening for COVID-19

The University has implemented the following screening protocols:

A. Employees who have been authorized to work on campus are required to complete the COVID-19 Return to Work Employee Health Assessment Self-Certification Form prior to returning. The form asks certain screening questions about the employee's health, including, among other items, whether the employee has had a recent fever or other COVID-19 symptoms or has been notified of exposure to COVID-19 within the last 14 days. An employee will again be required to complete the form prior to returning to campus under specific circumstances including, but not limited to, if the employee tests positive for COVID-19 or has close contact in the last 14 days with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 (this does not apply if an employee is fully vaccinated and remains asymptomatic after exposure). For the full list of circumstances, see Section V.A. of the COVID-19 Response Plan for Employees.

B. Employees and students must monitor symptoms every day before coming to campus for work or school.

C. If COVID-19 symptoms—such as a fever greater than 100.4 or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, headache, new loss of taste/smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose—are present (without a separate diagnosed cause, e.g. asthma, allergies, etc.), employees must stay home and contact their supervisor and students must not come to campus (including going to class and attending co-curricular activities).

D. Employees and students who display any symptoms related to COVID-19 (without a separate diagnosed cause, e.g. asthma, allergies, etc.) should seek medical care. Free resources to assist employees and students in determining if medical care should be sought include the CDC's Coronavirus Self-Checker and IU Health's Virtual COVID-19 Screening Tool.

E. Additional screening measures, including mandatory surveillance testing and temperature checks, may also be implemented in certain contexts, including, for example, residential students, student-athletes returning to practice, and specific academic programs.

F. Visitors are also expected to monitor symptoms before coming to campus and are asked to delay their visit if experiencing any.
III. Testing for COVID-19

The University makes symptomatic testing available to students and employees, as described below, and also implements mandatory surveillance testing for unvaccinated students and employees. When reviewing this information, note that polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing and antigen testing identify current infection with SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), while antibody testing identifies whether an individual has already been exposed to the virus in the past and has developed antibodies (but not whether the individual is currently infected). At this time, the University does not offer antibody testing.

More information about getting tested on campus, including times and locations, is available on the Get Tested webpage. In addition, please note that COVID-19 self-test kits are now becoming more available for purchase at various locations such as CVS and Walgreens.

A. Symptomatic Testing

The University provides symptomatic PCR testing through an agreement with IU Health that offers testing seven days a week. Consistent with the current testing protocols in the State of Indiana, this PCR testing is available for individuals who think they have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop symptoms.

1. Students who experience COVID-19 symptoms (without a separate diagnosed cause, e.g. asthma, allergies, etc.) should seek immediate medical care. Students may call the Student Health Center at 765-285-8431 to schedule an appointment. Students experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms should immediately inform staff to ensure that proper referrals can be made.

2. Employees who experience COVID-19 symptoms (without a separate diagnosed cause, e.g. asthma, allergies, etc.) should seek immediate medical care. Employees should contact their primary care provider to schedule an appointment. The Employee Quick Clinic is an option for employees who have an urgent need and a primary care provider is not available.

3. Students and employees are required to follow the advice and instructions of their health care provider.

B. Asymptomatic Testing

Students and employees seeking asymptomatic testing should refer to the Indiana State Department of Health website for testing sites in the community. Testing sites are listed by county. Ball State University is in Delaware County.

C. Surveillance Testing

The University will also utilize mandatory surveillance testing as a proactive mitigation strategy. Surveillance testing is used to identify positive cases and mitigate the transmission of the virus among a select group of unvaccinated students and employees.

Unvaccinated students and employees will be randomly selected on a weekly basis to be tested. Selected individuals will receive notice via their Ball State email account and provided with instructions to University provided testing. Participating in surveillance testing will be required unless the student or employee meets one or more of the pre-determined exceptions. Individuals may be exempt from surveillance testing by getting fully vaccinated. Vaccines are available at the Delaware County Vaccine clinic located on the University’s campus at the Health Professions Building.
IV. Student Pre-Arrival Testing Protocol for Fall 2021

A. Requirements

Every student who will attend on-campus classes or live in University housing or the Fall 2021 semester must either submit an attestation certifying full vaccination against COVID-19, or in the alternative:

a. Submit a COVID-19 test result administered within seven (7) days before arriving on campus; and
b. Self-quarantine between the date the test is administered and the return to campus.

Students may obtain testing through local health care providers, private testing options, or options available through the Indiana State Department of Health. Specific information about testing locations and the availability of free testing on campus may be found on our website.

After obtaining test results, students must upload an image of the test result to the University designated confidential testing result portal. The portal opened on July 5, 2021. Technical questions regarding the use of the portal may be directed to the Help Desk at 765-285-1517.

B. Vaccine Attestation

Students who are fully vaccinated (all doses of a vaccine, plus two weeks from the final dose) are required to attest to their fully vaccinated status through this web site before coming to campus. Students do not need to submit images of their vaccination record card. Fully vaccinated students do not need to be tested for COVID-19 and may return to campus at any time after submitting their attestation.

C. Negative Test Results

Unvaccinated students must submit evidence of a negative test result, administered within seven days of their return to campus through this website. Students who submit a negative test result and who are residing in University residence halls will receive confirmation of their designated move-in time. Questions regarding Housing move-in may be directed to the Office of Housing and Residence Life at housing@bsu.edu or call 765-285-8000.

Students with a negative test result living off campus may return to campus at any time after submitting evidence of a negative test result and receiving confirmation that it has been reviewed and accepted by the University.

D. Positive Test Results

Students with a positive test result will be provided with appropriate instructions to isolate prior to returning to campus.

Consistent with the current protocol, instructors will be advised when a student in an instructor’s course is in isolation, and students will be required to work directly with their instructors to make arrangements for academic work during isolation.

Students who test positive must isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of symptoms, and must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications before returning to campus.
E. Exceptions to Pre-Arrival Protocol
An unvaccinated student is not required to submit a pre-arrival test result if one of the following applies:

1. The student tested positive for COVID-19 in the 90-day period prior to returning to campus for Fall 2021, and the positive test result has been provided to the University through IU Health, the health department or a self-report using the University’s COVID-19 self reporting form available here; or

2. The student is enrolled entirely online for the Fall 2021 semester, is not residing in the residence halls, and will not be physically present on campus in the fall semester; or

3. The student was approved for an exception by the Director of the Health Center.

F. Compliance
Students are required to comply with this protocol unless the student meets the criteria for an exception. Students who failed to submit an attestation of their fully vaccinated status or, in the alternative, a COVID-19 test result will be subject to random COVID-19 testing as circumstances may require. Students will not be permitted to move-in to the residence halls until an attestation or negative test result is submitted. Students who submit a positive pre-arrival test will only be permitted to move-in after the required 10-day isolation period referenced in Section IV. D.

V. Contact Tracing
Contact tracing is a critical component of the response to a positive test of COVID-19. To that end, Ball State has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Delaware County Health Department which gives the University the authority to engage in contact tracing. If a student or employee receives a positive test through IU Health, the Student Health Center, or surveillance testing, or self-reports a positive test to the University, the individual will be contacted by a Ball State contact tracer.

During the initial conversation, the individual is queried regarding close contacts (defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or longer over a 24-hour period in the two days before they developed symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19). The individuals identified as close contacts are then contacted by a Ball State contact tracer and informed they have been exposed. The name of the individual who may have been the source of exposure is not identified at any time in this process.

Individuals are strongly encouraged to answer the call from the contact tracer and cooperate in providing the requested information. If the individual has caller ID, the phone will display the caller as ‘BSU COVID TEAM’ or (765) 285-7662.

In addition to Ball State contact tracers, individuals who test positive may also be contacted by contact tracers from the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH). Typically, ISDH will send a text message from 877-548-3444, and then follow-up with a phone call. The number on the caller ID will show as 833-670-0067 or may display as “IN Health COVID.” Again, individuals are strongly encouraged to cooperate with contact tracers from ISDH in order to assist in protecting the health of others who may have been exposed.

More information can be found in the Testing and Contact Tracing FAQs.

VI. Return to Work and Campus Activities after Diagnosis/Illness
While the CDC recommends a 14-day quarantine period as the safest strategy, the most recent guidance provides that the quarantine period can end after 10 days if the person experiences no symptoms. Consistent with this CDC guidance, when an individual is instructed to quarantine (if not fully vaccinated and asymptomatic
after exposure to someone who is or may be positive for COVID-19), that individual may end their quarantine after 10 days from the date of exposure (or, if the exact date of exposure is unknown, 10 days from the date of being instructed to quarantine) if they do not experience COVID-19 symptoms. In situations like this where quarantine is ended after 10 days due to not experiencing any symptoms, the person must continue to monitor for symptoms until 14 days after exposure. Individuals who develop symptoms after stopping quarantine must immediately isolate and contact a healthcare provider.

When an individual is instructed to isolate (due to a positive test), the individual is responsible for isolating in one of the following manners: (1) isolate for 10 days after symptom onset and resolution of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and with improvement of other symptoms; or (2) for persons who never develop symptoms, isolate for 10 days after testing positive; or (3) if under the care of a health care provider, in a manner consistent with the health care provider’s instructions. Upon completion of the quarantine or isolation period, the individual may return to work, classes, and campus. Employees (including student employees) will also be required to complete the self-certification form prior to returning to campus after a diagnosis of COVID-19 or after being identified as a close contact of an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days. Supervisors should not ask for information or documentation beyond the self-certification.

VII. Faculty Guidance for Students Return to the Classroom after Quarantine and Isolation

In situations where a student may be required to quarantine or isolate, the student’s instructors of record will be provided with a standard notice of absence indicating that the student will be absent from class for an unknown period of time. When the student is able to do so, the student will be expected to coordinate with the instructor a plan for continuing their education. The instructor is expected to work with the student on such a plan. The instructor may set a deadline by which missed coursework is to be completed. Furthermore, while the student may disclose information regarding their situation to the instructor, a student’s medical situation is private and confidential. As such, the instructor should not ask for or require medical documentation, either to prove the viability of the absence or to allow the student to return to class.

VIII. Dashboard

The University has created an online dashboard to communicate information about COVID-19 on our campus. To be transparent, the dashboard provides data collected from IU Health, third party on-campus testing sources, and self-reports from both students and employees. The dashboard is updated daily and includes information about the number of people tested, the number of positive cases, estimated active cases, estimated recovered cases, quarantine and isolation capacity, and the number of employees and students who have submitted attestations of their vaccination status. People are encouraged to visit the dashboard for updated information and related FAQs.