



Wharton County Junior College



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**Coronavirus
Response Plan**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Wharton County Junior College (“WCJC”) is committed to providing our students with a quality education while ensuring that they may achieve their academic goals in an environment that promotes their overall health and safety. Moreover, the College remains stalwart in our dedication to our faculty and staff, who continue to instruct, serve, and support our students throughout this difficult time.

The challenges arising from the Coronavirus (“Coronavirus” or “COVID-19”) pandemic have been far-reaching and will continue to impact the lives and livelihoods of our college community well into the foreseeable future. As such, the WCJC Administration has developed a comprehensive Coronavirus Response Plan that will enable operations to move forward in a methodical and controlled fashion, thereby mitigating risk and maximizing our ability to serve our community in a safe manner. Decisions outlined within the WCJC Coronavirus Response Plan are based upon that foundational concept, in conjunction with guidance from federal, state, and local authorities. As circumstances relating to COVID-19 continue to evolve, this WCJC Coronavirus Response Plan will remain flexible and responsive to change.

II. PROTOCOL DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Processes and protocols outlined within the WCJC Coronavirus Response Plan are based on recommendations and guidelines established by the following federal, state, and local authorities:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) Websites:
 - [Colleges, Universities, and Higher Learning: Plan, Prepare, and Respond](#);
 - [Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education](#);
 - [Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education Administrators for SARS-CoV-2 Testing](#);
 - [Coronavirus Websites](#);
- The White House [Opening Up America Again Plan](#);
- The Office of the Governor of Texas’ [Report to Open Texas](#) and all Governor’s Executive Orders;
- Compliance standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;
- [Recommended Health Protocols for Institutions of Higher Education](#) established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB); and
- Consultation, as needed, with local authorities and emergency management personnel.

WCJC protocols have been developed in adherence with best practice guidelines and in an effort to mitigate health and safety risks to all students, faculty, and staff at WCJC. Compliance and safety protocols will continue to be monitored and adjusted, as needed, based on guidelines and information ascertained from external regulatory groups, as well as through evaluation of internal efficacy metrics.

WCJC has established a WCJC Coronavirus Task Force (“Task Force”) to monitor and evaluate the WCJC Coronavirus Response Plan and all associated protocols and procedures. The Task Force will manage all reporting related to the WCJC Coronavirus Response Plan and will keep the President, Executive Cabinet, and Board of Trustees apprised of all planning processes, modifications, and outcomes throughout implementation.

III. PHASES OF RESPONSE

Following the example set by federal, state, and local authorities, WCJC has implemented a phase-based response model to minimize risk of exposure, while maintaining and expanding essential operations. Timelines will be determined based on prior-phase implementation outcomes, updated or expanded guidelines from external regulatory agencies, and recommendations from the Task Force.

At present, the College has proceeded through four phases of operation:

- Pre-Open: Restricted Access for Essential Employees Only (March – May 2020)
- Phase One: Limited Contact (Effective June 1, 2020)
- Phase Two: Expanded Operations (Effective July 6, 2020)
- Phase Three: Managed Response (Effective August 24, 2020)
- Phase Four: Restorative Stabilization (Effective August 23, 2021)

Details related to the specifics of Phases 1 – 3 were detailed in the WCJC Reopen Plan. Phase 4 is described below and is subject to change based on circumstances and guidance from federal, state, and local authorities. Protocols established within the various phases of the WCJC Coronavirus Response Plan will include four primary considerations which will allow for adequate preparation, implementation, and evaluation of each phase: Employees, Students, Facilities, and Mitigation Measures.

IV. PHASE FOUR: RESTORATIVE STABILIZATION (START DATE - AUGUST 23, 2021)

Protocols for Phase Four attempt to establish guidelines which will allow for restoration and stabilization of College procedures, with a return to normal operations across the institution, as feasible. In addition, all Phase Four regulations adhere to state requirements, as outlined in the [Governor’s Executive Order GA-38](#), issued on July 29, 2021.

A. Employees

1. All employees will be on campus during standard work hours, with all instructional duties, office hours, and work operations attended to, based on the needs of the unit, area, department, or division.
2. Faculty are expected to manage office hours based on their schedule and course load and through approval of their Department Head/Program Director and Division Chair.

3. Student service offerings and all administrative functions will be available during standard operating hours and at full capacity.

B. Students

1. Training materials will be provided at the start of each semester to all students via their WCJC Student Email regarding Coronavirus risk factors, proper hygiene, quarantining requirements, and necessary cleaning protocols before returning to campus. Additional training will be provided, as necessary, in subsequent semesters.
2. Athletic offerings, on-campus housing, and dining services will return to their standard operations and, where applicable, full capacity.
3. Students are encouraged to maintain social distancing, where feasible, while on WCJC campuses, including in study spaces, lounge/lobbies, recreational areas, etc.

C. Facilities

1. All buildings will continue to be open and accessible during standard business hours.
2. All in-use classrooms will be sanitized once per day by custodial staff, as will other shared spaces and high-touch surfaces, including restrooms, handrails, and handles.

D. Mitigation Measures

1. Large events and gatherings of 40+ individuals will be considered on an individual basis and are subject to approval by the supervising Vice President and President.
2. The use of PPE is optional and up to the discretion and responsibility of the individual employee or student. WCJC strongly encourages individuals to follow good hygiene practices, including regularly washing your hands and staying home when sick.
3. WCJC *strongly encourages* individuals to get immunized and boosted to help protect themselves and others from SARS-CoV-2 variants
4. WCJC *strongly encourages* the use of face masks/coverings for all individuals, regardless of immunization status, most particularly when unable to maintain social distancing.
5. WCJC is no longer responsible for supplying disposable face masks, shields, or cleaning/sanitation materials within individual offices or classrooms. Units will need to purchase hand sanitizer, wipes, disinfecting spray, etc. from their supply budgets.

V. INSTRUCTIONAL PROTOCOLS

Instructional Protocols provide specific details related to course offerings, including identification of courses that can be offered online or in a hybrid capacity and courses that must be offered face-to-face.

Instructional Protocols will be maintained by the VPI for reference throughout the response effort. Modifications to Instructional Protocols may be required depending on changes to federal, state, local, or institutional guidelines or recommendations.

1. Beginning with Phase Four, all classroom capacities will be expanded to 100%, allowing for increased enrollment in face-to-face sections.
2. The use of face masks/coverings will be optional for all faculty, staff, and students and may not be required within an individual classroom, laboratory, or office.
3. The use of hybrid and online course modalities will continue to be offered, allowing for a greater variety of instructional options for students. In addition, all courses will maintain a course shell in Blackboard for ease of access and use in all sections.
4. Students who are required to isolate or quarantine for any reason must maintain regular contact with their instructors and are responsible for ensuring that all work requirements for their courses are attended to within the course deadlines or that they drop the course by the [appropriate deadline](#).
 - a. Faculty must coordinate with isolated/quarantined students, as needed, based on the standard WCJC guidelines related to excused absences.
 - b. There will be no extensions, exemptions, or modifications to WCJC student rules, institutional deadlines, payment refunds, or other WCJC policies for any reason, including student illness or absence.

VI. SELF-REPORTING PROTOCOLS

A. Employees

Employees must self-report to the college for any of the following conditions:

- Experience new or worsening symptoms associated with COVID-19; or
- Received a confirmed positive test, are diagnosed with, or being treated for COVID-19; or
- Are residing with an individual who has been diagnosed with or has been tested positive for COVID-19.

1. Self-Reporting Requirements

To self-report, employees must submit a [WCJC COVID-19 Employee Self-Reporting Form](#) and notify their direct supervisor and Division Chair, if applicable. Employee self-report forms will route to the Dean of Human Resources who will notify the individual's direct supervisor, Division Chair, if applicable, supervising Executive Cabinet member, and the WCJC President. Names of individuals who self-report will not be released publicly in order to maintain confidentiality.

As a general guideline, an employee who meets any of the criteria listed above must:

- Submit the [WCJC COVID-19 Employee Self-Reporting Form](#) and notify their direct supervisor immediately (within 24 hours);
- Notify their healthcare provider and get tested (*highly recommended*);
- Self-isolate, monitor their symptoms, and refrain from coming on any WCJC campus. Specific isolation/quarantine requirements will be determined following consultation with the Dean of Human Resources.

An employee who fails to submit a [WCJC COVID-19 Employee Self-Reporting Form](#) within 24 hours will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The health, safety, and security of the college is dependent on all employees adhering to the protocols outlined within this plan.

2. Isolation / Quarantine Period and Return-to-Work Guidelines

WCJC will follow CDC guidelines with regard to [quarantine and isolation requirements](#).

Employees who must take leave due to COVID-related illness, isolation, or quarantine will be contacted, as appropriate, by the Dean of Human Resources regarding their leave options. The Dean of Human Resources will also contact the employee's direct supervisor with relevant information regarding that individual's specific situation and return-to-work protocols.

Employees who are able to work in a remote capacity may be permitted to do so without taking leave, pending approval from their direct supervisor and supervising Executive Cabinet member.

Faculty who are teaching in face-to-face classes and who are required to isolate/quarantine, for any reason, must immediately notify their Division Chair and make arrangements for their course to be converted to online instruction.

In the event that an individual becomes too sick to work remotely, leave must be taken.

B. Students

Students must self-report to the college for any of the following conditions:

- Experience new or worsening symptoms associated with COVID-19; or
- Received a confirmed positive test, are diagnosed with, or being treated for COVID-19; or
- Are residing with an individual who has been diagnosed with or has been tested positive for COVID-19.

1. Self-Reporting Requirements

Students must submit a [WCJC COVID-19 Student Self-Reporting Form](#) immediately (within 24 hours) for any of above reasons. Student self-report forms will route to the Dean of Student Success who will contact the student directly for additional context, as needed. Names of individuals who self-report will not be released publicly in order to maintain confidentiality.

As a general guideline, students who meet any of the criteria listed above must:

- Submit the [WCJC COVID-19 Student/Visitor Self-Reporting Form](#) and notify their instructors immediately (within 24 hours);
- Notify their healthcare provider and get tested (*highly recommended*);
- Self-isolate, monitor their symptoms, and refrain from coming on any WCJC campus. Specific isolation/quarantine requirements will be determined following consultation with the Dean of Student Success.

2. Isolation / Quarantine Period and Return-to-Campus Guidelines

WCJC will follow CDC guidelines with regard to [quarantine and isolation requirements](#).

Students who must take leave due to COVID-related illness, isolation, or quarantine will be contacted, as appropriate, by the Dean of Student Success regarding their return-to-campus protocols.

In the event that a student is enrolled in a face-to-face or hybrid class offering, the Dean of Student Success will the student's instructor(s). It will then be the responsibility of the instructor and the student to make arrangements regarding continuation of coursework or the potential need to drop the course prior to the drop deadline.

VII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Primary communication of updates and changes will occur via email and employees are encouraged to check their WCJC email on a daily basis to keep apprised of current and future plans. Prior to the start of each new phase, the VPPIE will hold an open forum in which to discuss plans and take questions. Employees should route all questions or concerns through their supervisor to their respective Executive Cabinet member, as appropriate.

In consideration of reporting requirements related to the Clery Act, WCJC has developed a Coronavirus Website that provides information related to COVID-19, necessary health and safety precautions, self-reporting protocols, FAQs, and links to the CDC website.

This plan was last updated on: January 10, 2022

Questions regarding the WCJC Coronavirus Response Plan should be directed to Dr. Amanda Allen, Vice President of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (allena@wcjc.edu).



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