



HOWARD COLLEGE
— MAKING DREAMS REAL —

HOWARD COLLEGE – COVID-19 RESPONSE

OPEN HOWARD COLLEGE

Beginning in early 2020, the college began monitoring and sharing information concerning COVID-19 with the college community. During Spring Break 2020, the college activated its COVID-19 Response Team as concerns heightened about the spread of the virus across the country. Decisions were made to protect the health and safety of all as we delayed the break for another week and quickly transitioned to an online instructional format with a few exceptions. As the situation evolved and emergency status was enacted at the national, state and local levels, Howard College followed Presidential, Governor and local authority Orders and guidance which allowed the college to operate during this time of emergency in an altered operations status. Multiple decisions were made as we worked through the spring semester and planned for the 2020 summer and fall semesters. To guide our journey, Howard College developed the **Open Howard College Strategic Plan** <https://howardcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/PDF/Consumer/COVID/Open%20Howard%20College%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>

We advanced through three phases of reopening as we planned for Phase IV which began on August 9. During the 20-21 academic year, we continued to use and update resources as we moved forward and the situation evolved. As the 20-21 academic year progressed and various stages of reopening were being implemented based on COVID-19 penetration, we responded to national, state and local guidance, requirements and orders. In the 21-22 academic year as further stages of reopening and recovery were underway, we followed the guidance of various authorities and sources.

As we prepare for the 22-23 academic year, we will follow the continued guidance of various authorities and sources as shared below.

<https://www.highered.texas.gov/misc/coronavirus-update-for-higher-education/>

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/sy-22-23-public-health-guidance.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0811-covid-guidance.html>

https://www.acha.org/documents/Resources/Guidelines/ACHA_COVID_Considerations_for_IHEs_Fall_2022.pdf

<https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-issues-executive-order-providing-clarity-and-uniformity-in-the-states-covid-19-response>

<https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-renews-covid-19-disaster-declaration-in-august-2022>



Our plan is devised so that we can adapt as the situation changes. This document is the condensed version from the original version and is updated as needed. Please read it carefully. All individuals in the college community must do their part to make this work effectively. We will continue making decisions based on the guidance of authorities to do what is best for the health and safety of all. Thus, definitions and protocols will change accordingly. Significant penetration of COVID-19 in the area will be monitored and can result in tighter restrictions with the reverse action in areas of low penetration as allowed by state guidelines. Having learned that penetration and hospitalizations as a result of the virus can fluctuate resulting in different actions taken by authorities, we have implemented a color coded readiness status with corresponding protocols that reflect the COVID-19 progression to date (see attached). As situations change, we will provide the alert status.

DEFINITIONS

1. Definitions

Campus – all land and buildings owned, provided for or leased by Howard College as lessee.

Work center – a building or portion of a building

Single-person offices – offices where an individual can work alone

Employee – any person employed by or volunteering for Howard College, be it full time, part-time, or adjunct

Student – any current or prospective student with or without appointments for advising, testing, tutoring, etc.

Contract labor – non-Howard College employees who may be working on various projects on campus

Lessee – any organization renting space from the college

Public – members of the public, members of the Harold Davis Fitness Center, children and families associated with Howard Cottage, bookstore and dining services customers, attendees of events scheduled in campus buildings

Visitors – visits for recruiting or business purposes

Individual – employee, current/prospective student, contractor, lessee, public member or visitor

Central check-in point – screening stations in each campus building that will include a stationary thermal/sanitation location

Exposure –

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/if-you-were-exposed.html>

Exposure Risks –

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/risks-exposure.html>

Isolation- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>

Vaccinations and Boosters- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/immunize/vaccine.aspx>

Masks- <https://gov.texas.gov/coronavirus-executive-orders>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

INDIVIDUAL HEALTH

2. Individual Health Protocols/Foundation of *Open Howard College*



- a. **Self-screen before coming to campus or leaving on-campus residence** for any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19 in a way that is not normal for you/symptoms of COVID-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus:
 - i. Cough
 - ii. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - iii. Chills or fever based on thermometer reading taken prior to coming to campus or leaving on-campus residence.
 - iv. Muscle or body aches
 - v. Fatigue
 - vi. Headache
 - vii. Sore throat
 - viii. New loss of taste or smell
 - ix. Diarrhea
 - x. Nausea or vomiting
 - xi. Congestion or runny nose
- b. **If employees, students, contractors, lessees, public members, or visitors have any of the above symptoms or test positive for COVID, do NOT come to campus.** In each campus community there are numbers to call to speak with professionals about concerns you might have relative to COVID-19 or associated symptoms.
- c. Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, **students and employees must report if they have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19**, in accordance with health information sharing regulations for COVID-19 and other applicable federal and state privacy and confidentiality laws, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
<https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/hipaa-covid19/index.html>
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>
Please contact by phone or email your supervisor, student services lead (Big Spring, Dean of Students/Christi Mikeska; Lamesa, Campus Executive Dean/Monica Castro; San Angelo, Student Services Director/Mike Hemmeter; or SWCD, Campus Director of Student Services/Shannon Creswell) or specific campus contact if a contractor, lessee, public member or visitor. The supervisor, student services lead or campus contact will then email Rhonda Kernick, Chief HR Officer and Fabian Serrano, Chief Safety and Security Officer. These individuals will confer with the campus leaders and then the president for final actions.
- d. **Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or are assumed to have COVID-19 due to new or worsening signs/symptoms listed above may NOT return to campus or leave campus housing until:**
 - i. At least 24 hours have passed *since recovery* (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications);
 - ii. The individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
 - iii. At least 5 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*. If you had moderate illness (shortness of breath or difficulty breathing) or severe illness (hospitalization), you need to isolate through day 10. For patients with severe illness or a weakened immune system, consult your doctor before ending isolation.

or

 - the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis;

or

 - you test negative.



- e. **If you have known close contact with a person with COVID-19, you should wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and get tested at least 5 full days after your last exposure according to CDC guidelines.**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/if-you-were-exposed.html>

If you develop symptoms, you should begin isolation.

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>

CAMPUS HEALTH

3. Campus Health Protocols

- a. Howard College continually seeks guidance from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board regarding COVID-19 protocols and will continue to follow all executive orders issued by Texas Governor Greg Abbott.

<https://gov.texas.gov/coronavirus-executive-orders>

<https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-issues-executive-order-providing-clarity-and-uniformity-in-the-states-covid-19-response>

[https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/EO-GA-](https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/EO-GA-38_continued_response_to_the_COVID-19_disaster_IMAGE_07-29-2021.pdf)

[38_continued_response_to_the_COVID-19_disaster_IMAGE_07-29-2021.pdf](https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/EO-GA-38_continued_response_to_the_COVID-19_disaster_IMAGE_07-29-2021.pdf)

Based on Governor Abbott's Executive Orders, the wearing of a mask is a personal choice for college employees, students and visitors on our campuses. Individuals are encouraged to review CDC guidelines and Texas Department of State Health Services recommendations to make an informed decision regarding masking that best suits their personal situation. In some clinical, health and prison settings, masks can be required and college employees and students will follow the related guidelines. Non-medical grade face coverings have been and will be provided by Howard College for all employees, students or visitors wishing to use them. Eye goggles will also be provided in certain lab situations.

Howard College will have a culture supportive of masking and vaccinations based on personal choices and will not inquire about vaccination status following state guidelines or health status regarding same.

Efforts will be made to follow CDC guidelines regarding gatherings.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>

- b. **After conducting the individual self-screening before coming to campus, individuals will be expected to secondary screen by checking in at the stationary thermal/sanitation stations located in multiple campus buildings.**
- c. **Howard Cottage** will follow the CDC and state guidelines relative to childcare centers.
- d. In the case of **Health Professions**, screening and face covering protocols will follow clinical and state guidelines for both students and clients. Face coverings will be provided by the college in these locations.
- e. **Any individual showing signs of possible COVID-19 infection will be sent home or asked to leave campus to seek appropriate medical care.** A contractor or lessee with an affected employee will be asked to follow the same protocol in the section above that will be followed for college employees and students.



- e. **Individuals should strive to maintain distance** from other individuals not within the same household. Other measures such as **face covering as appropriate, increased airflow and ventilation, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation should be rigorously practiced.**
- f. **Wash or disinfect hands upon entering campus and after any interaction** with employees, students, the public, or items in the work center.
- g. **Plexiglass barriers are used to maintain distance** and should be respected.
- h. **Air purifiers are placed in high-traffic areas.**

EMPLOYEE WORK PATTERNS

4. Employee Work Patterns

<https://howardcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/PDF/Consumer/COVID/Open%20Howard%20College%20Alert%20Status.pdf>

STUDENT SERVICES

5. Campus-Based Instructional, Bookstore, Residence Hall, Dining Services, Athletics and Fine Arts Protocols

<https://howardcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/PDF/Consumer/COVID/Open%20Howard%20College%20Alert%20Status.pdf>

HOWARD COTTAGE

6. Howard Cottage/Big Spring Campus Protocols

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Children who are COVID-19 positive or exhibiting symptoms should not come to the Cottage. Upon the completion of 10 days isolation, children may return. Students who are exposed should not come to the Cottage until the sixth day after exposure unless they are exhibiting symptoms. When symptoms begin after exposure, the 10 days isolation begins. In the event of exposure to a confirmed case, the parents will be notified.

HAROLD DAVIS FITNESS CENTER

7. Harold Davis Fitness Center/Big Spring Campus Protocols

<https://howardcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/PDF/Consumer/COVID/Open%20Howard%20College%20Alert%20Status.pdf>

If the Fitness Center needs to be closed for sanitation purposes, members will be notified.

PUBLIC EVENTS

8. Public Event Protocols



Public event, group meetings and camps will follow CDC, state and local guidelines.

NOTIFICATIONS

9. Notifications

- a. As appropriate, faculty, staff, students, families and the public will be notified of campus and building closures, class and event cancellations, modified class schedules and any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure.
- b. In accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, the college will notify local health officials, faculty, staff and students immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), FERPA and other applicable laws and regulations. Due to the small numbers of individuals on our campuses, the campus community is reminded of the importance of privacy and the need to handle reported cases professionally. Since COVID-19 is still active in our communities, it will be noted on the website that active cases exist and individuals should assume that and follow all protocols accordingly. The college has implemented a dashboard <https://howardcollege.edu/covid-dashboard/> on its website. The information will be updated every Friday afternoon. Please read the definitions for clarification.
<https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/pandemic-preparedness-workplace-and-americans-disabilities-act>
- c. When the college is made aware of a confirmed case or exposure to confirmed cases, the college will inform individuals affected if possible. Thus, individuals are asked to be mindful of their contacts and places of occupancy while on campus. The college will inform those who have been exposed to follow CDC guidelines, self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.

Any employee concerns should be directed to their supervisor and/or the Chief Human Resources Officer. Any student concerns should be directed to the campus student services officer.