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Jimmy H. Baker
CHANCELLOR

MEMORANDUM #2022-EXE-002

DATE: January 5, 2022
TO: Presidents, Alabama Community College System
FROM: Jimmy H. Baker, Chancellor

RE: COVID-19 Protocols

As our colleges prepare to open their doors for Spring Semester, the sharp increase in positive cases of COVID-19 is a sober reminder that COVID-19 is still a very active threat in this state. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is now closely monitoring the spread of a new variant B.1.1.529, also known as Omicron. Preliminary reports suggest that Omicron is more transmissible than Delta, but perhaps not as potent.

In Alabama, the percent positivity in COVID-19 tests more than doubled in the past week and all but six of the state's counties are at a high level of community transmission. Based on the most recent guidance issued by the CDC and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), the ACCS recommends the following:

VACCINATIONS, BOOSTERS & FLU SHOTS

Simply put, vaccination remain the leading prevention strategy to protect individuals from COVID-19 disease and end the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 vaccine significantly reduces the potential of severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and [everyone five years of age and older](#) is now eligible to get a free COVID-19 vaccination.

Flu Season is also upon us. If you haven't already received a flu shot, you might consider getting one.

We urge you to encourage employees and students to get vaccinated and boosted

COVID-19 EXPOSURE NOTIFICATION, QUARANTINE, AND ISOLATION

Definitions

Close contact: is defined as within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory confirmed) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period

Fully-vaccinated: People are considered fully-vaccinated 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series or 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine

Persons with Positive COVID-19 Test Results

Everyone, regardless of vaccination status, shall:

- Stay home for 5 days
- If there are no symptoms or symptoms are resolving after 5 days, individual may return to campus/work. The individual should test, if practicable, prior to returning to work.
- Individual shall wear a mask around others for 5 additional days

Note: If the individual has a fever, they should continue to stay home until the fever resolves.

Persons with Exposure to COVID-19

Persons who are fully vaccinated within the last 6 months OR have been boosted shall:

- Wear a mask around others for 10 days.
- Test on day 5, if possible.

Persons who are fully vaccinated over 6 months ago and are not boosted or are unvaccinated shall:

- Stay home for 5 days. After that, continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
- Test on day 5 if possible.

If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms their symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.

The CDC's updated guidelines related to quarantine and isolation can be found [here](#). The Alabama Department of Public Health's guidance can be found [here](#).

We would also suggest reviewing the [Alabama COVID-19 Dashboard Hub](#) which houses all four of their COVID-19 dashboards on the ADPH website. On that webpage, your administration can identify vaccine distribution statistics that can assist with a research-based decision for the institution.

It is imperative that each person continues to do his/her part to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in accordance with CDC Guidelines. This includes:

- Staying away from the workplace when you are not well.
- Regularly washing and sanitizing your hands.

- Avoiding touching your face, eyes, and mouth.
- Avoiding sneezing or coughing without appropriate covering of the nose and mouth.

Notification

Any college with a student or faculty/staff member who reports a laboratory-confirmed positive test for COVID-19 must notify Bryant Cline, Director of Health Programs at Bryant.cline@accs.edu.

REMOTE WORK

As a reminder, the System Office does not recommend the general use of remote work as an employee-requested option to COVID-19 quarantine or isolation. However, this decision is left to the sound discretion of each President. If your college permits remote work for those who are COVID-19 positive, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have exposure to a positive COVID-19 case, your college must have clear and written policies about which circumstances and which job classifications and positions may be approved for a temporary remote work option during a COVID-19 quarantine or isolation period.

LOCAL CONDITIONS

As you know, public health guidance can change quickly in this rapidly evolving environment. Please continue to monitor local, state, and national health and safety guidance and maintain contingency plans should they be needed at your colleges based on local conditions.

As college president, you are in the best position to assess the impact of the virus in your community. Should health conditions change and pose a greater threat to students and employees, you may determine it is in the best interest of the college community to pivot to an alternative mode of operation and/or service. In that event, you are to notify me in writing, with a copy of Susan Price, Chief of Staff (susan.price@accs.edu) of the circumstances requiring change in operations and/or service delivery and a projected timeline for the resumption of normal operations and services.

Thank you for your continued vigilance in this new year.