

# COVID-19

## FALL 2021 GUIDE



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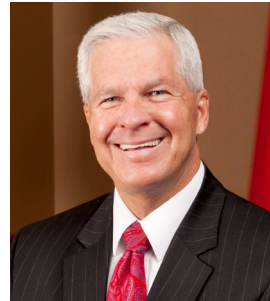
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## Message from the President

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Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

As you read this guide, I hope you will find the information provided useful and informative as we all work together to navigate through these challenging times. I encourage you to continue practicing appropriate safety and social distancing measures. Your efforts in keeping our college community safe speak to our unwavering commitment in providing a successful learning experience for our students, even during these most challenging circumstances. Together, I look forward to another safe and productive semester of learning.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Warren Nichols". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Warren Nichols  
President



## College of the Mainland

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### Fall 2021 COVID Guidance

The rise of the COVID-19 Delta variant has led to rapid spread throughout the community, and hospitalization among the unvaccinated. The Delta COVID variant is easier to spread and more likely to infect young people than previous variants. Some cases of Delta have occurred among those who have been vaccinated, however, very few vaccinated people have severe illness.

College of the Mainland remains committed to providing a safe and successful learning experience for students as we return to normal operations. All COM services and programs are available on campus under standard scheduling.

Consistent with guidance from CDC and orders from Governor Abbott, COM will continue to actively promote safety, health, and hygiene measures. COM encourages flexibility, as the extent of disease, the ability of hospitals to keep up with demand, and the guidance from state and federal authorities could require changes in existing plans and processes. The information presented here is true and accurate as of the date of dissemination.

## Staying Healthy

### Vaccination

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to help end the COVID-19 pandemic, to maintain your own health, and help protect those in the community who cannot be vaccinated. COM does not and cannot require vaccination for any student, employee, or visitor. **However, we strongly encourage everyone who can get vaccinated to do so as soon as possible.** To find vaccines near you, visit [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov). Most Walmart, Kroger, HEB, Walgreens, CVS pharmacies, and health care providers have vaccine available. COVID vaccine is free.

### Masks

CDC now recommends that you mask in indoor public areas to maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others in areas with high COVID rates. As of August 2, Texas and Galveston County fall into the category of high transmission. Governor Abbott issued an executive order that prohibits COM from requiring masks individuals to mask while on campus. While masks are no longer required, we support and encourage their use. Anyone who prefers to wear a mask may do so.

### Distancing Encouraged

Classrooms will operate at full capacity. When circumstances allow, distancing provides additional protection from disease transmission. Distancing can also reduce the number of people asked to quarantine in the event someone on campus comes down with COVID.

### Wash/Sanitize Your Hands

Frequent handwashing will help to protect you from COVID-19 and many other illnesses. All employees and students are encouraged to wash their hands throughout the day. Proper handwashing technique includes the use of soap and rubbing for 20 seconds, covering all parts of hands and wrists. In addition to frequent handwashing, please use the hand sanitizer stations installed throughout campus.



## Maintaining a Healthy Campus

### Stay Home if Sick

If you are feeling sick in anyway, it is best to stay home and away from others. Contact your instructors or supervisors to address your absence. Please do not come on campus while ill. Additionally, if you have any reason to suspect you may have COVID-19, and have taken a COVID test, do NOT come to campus while you wait for your results.

### Health Monitoring

Employees, students, and contractors coming to campus are encouraged to assess their health prior to visiting campus. Information is available at [www.com.edu/coronavirus/selfscreen](http://www.com.edu/coronavirus/selfscreen). We ask you to consider if you have symptoms related to COVID-19, a recent exposure to a person with COVID-19, or a positive COVID test. If any of these categories listed above apply to you, DO NOT come to campus. Contact your healthcare provider for medical guidance and notify your supervisor/instructor of the needed absence. See the next section on how to self-report.

### Self-Reporting

Students, employees, and COM contractors are asked to submit an [online self-report](#) and obtain additional guidance if you:

- Tested positive for COVID-19 with or without symptoms within the last 10 days
- Have symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19
- Had close contact (< 6' for 15+ minutes within a 24-hour period) with a known case of COVID-19 within the last 14 days.

Those who self-report will receive guidance regarding when they may return to campus. COM collaborates with the Galveston County Health District for case reporting, contact tracing, and notification of possible exposures.

### Case Investigation

Submission of a [self-report](#) triggers an investigation and allows us to quickly determine best practices to protect campus. This may include instructions to stay off campus and quarantine or isolate at home. In some instances, this may involve notification of others who have been in close contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19. Any person under investigation or who has completed a self-report and is awaiting response from COM should not be on campus until their investigation has concluded and they receive clear guidance. Individuals may be required to isolate, quarantine, and/or test before returning to campus.

### Close Contacts

If someone has been named as a possible exposure during an investigation, investigators will seek information to determine if there was close contact as defined by CDC. A person must meet all three criteria to be considered close contact:

- 15 minutes (cumulative)
- Within 6 feet proximity
- During a 24-hour span

COM will consult and collaborate with the Galveston County Health District for official public health guidance, assistance, and referral on case investigations and notifications.

### **Quarantine and Isolation**

Isolation applies to individuals who have COVID-19, or symptoms that could be COVID-19. Quarantine applies to those who have been exposed to COVID. The duration of isolation and quarantine depends on a variety of factors. Employees will receive specific instructions from Human Resources. Students will receive instructions from the office of the Dean of Students.

In either case, an individual must contact HR or the Dean of Students office at the end of their period of isolation or quarantine to receive clearance to return to campus.

### **Failure to Comply**

You may be asked to leave campus if you are not complying with this guidance. Failure to comply is considered a discipline matter for employees or students.

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## **Student Support and Services**

### **Students with Disabilities and Requests for Accommodations**

Students in need of services are encouraged to notify (and request services from) the Counselor for Students with Disabilities regarding any assistance or special accommodations they may need. Refer to the Guidelines for Documentation (PDF) for more information on registering for Services for Students with Disabilities. For more info, please contact [hbankston@com.edu](mailto:hbankston@com.edu) or 409-933-8520.

### **Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds and COVID-19 Financial Aid Support**

The federal government has provided colleges and universities with emergency grant funding to assist with student financial needs related to COVID-19. See COM's COVID Financial Assistance page <http://www.com.edu/coronavirus/covid-aid> for more details. Students must meet all eligibility requirements for federal financial aid and are eligible to apply each semester while funds are available. Summer 2021 applications will be available shortly.

## Employee Considerations

### Reasonable Accommodations and Other Modifications Due to COVID-19

Employees may request reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) through COM Human Resources.

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

(EAP) is a voluntary, work-based service that offers free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and

follow-up services to employees who have personal and/or work-related problems. The EAP is available to address a broad body of issues affecting mental and emotional well-being, such as alcohol and other substance abuse, stress, grief, family problems, and psychological disorders. To learn more, visit UTEAP at [www.uth.edu/uteap](http://www.uth.edu/uteap), or call (800) 346-3549).

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## Supervisor Considerations

### Requests for Workspace Modifications

At this time, no workplace modifications are required. Those that are in place may be maintained if desired. If you require Facilities Services assistance to rearrange furniture, remove barriers, or implement additional precautions, please communicate this through your supervisor to make those requests. Please note that some requests may not be implemented

### Cleaning

Please reinforce to all employees that they play a critical role in cleaning and disinfecting workspaces and common areas. Every classroom and work area should have hand sanitizer, surface disinfectant, and paper towels or wipes. If your work group needs

additional resources, please contact Facilities Services.

### Reinforce “Stay Home if Sick”

Supervisors serve a critical role in ensuring a healthy workplace. Please encourage employees to stay home if sick or to go home if symptoms emerge while on campus.

### If an Employee Gets Sick/Tests Positive/Has an Exposure

Please ask the employee to complete a [self-report](#) as soon as possible. This triggers the investigation from HR and allows us to quickly determine best practices to protect campus. This may include instructions to quarantine or isolate at home and the notification of those who have been in close contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19.



## Facilities Services

### Cleaning Protocols

COM Facilities Management works with our custodial contractor and custodial staff to establish cleaning protocols consistent with CDC guidelines. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of campus surfaces continues. Employees should participate in the cleaning and disinfecting of the shared areas they use, work or teach in. Facilities services will provide surface disinfectant and wipes or paper towels for use in classrooms and shared spaces. Please continue to spray and wipe surfaces, equipment, and workspaces between users.

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