

September 30, 2020

Dear Iowa State Community,

Yesterday, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced [quarantine is no longer recommended](#) if both the individual with COVID-19 and their close contacts were wearing face coverings consistently and correctly during their contact. The change applies to business, education, and child care settings. It does not apply to household or health care settings. Iowa State University will be implementing the updated guidance this week.

**Quarantine vs. Isolation.** Quarantine keeps someone who has had close contact with a positive case away from others. Isolation keeps someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 away from others. Close contact is defined as within 6 feet for 15 consecutive minutes or more.

**What the data show.** University data has not shown evidence of transmission in the classroom where [cloth face coverings are required](#). Of the 1,729 individuals identified as close contacts since day one of the semester, the vast majority were identified as close contacts in non-classroom settings. Only 48 (all students) were identified as close contacts in the classroom, with one individual later testing positive with evidence pointing to a non-classroom exposure. University data continues to show a [low percentage](#) of quarantined individuals who have eventually tested positive for COVID-19.

**What this means.** We do not expect the revised IDPH guidance to have a significant impact on the number of individuals at Iowa State required to quarantine. Based on data from the university's contact tracing process, nearly 98% of individuals required to quarantine were exposed in non-classroom settings. This includes household settings – residence halls, Greek housing, and apartments – and dining areas where cloth face coverings are not required at all times.

**What's not changing.** Face coverings will continue to be required at all times in classrooms and other campus locations, and must be worn over your mouth and nose. All close contacts not consistently and correctly wearing face coverings will still be required to quarantine. Close contacts are still strongly recommended to test 48 hours after exposure and are required to report symptoms daily to the Thielen Student Health Center. Individuals can also choose to voluntarily quarantine and will have the support of the University.

In addition, the university's robust mitigation strategies remain in place: reduced campus density and classroom capacity, enhanced cleaning, targeted testing, isolation of confirmed cases, [social gathering policy](#) for on- and off-campus, and the [Cyclones Care behaviors](#).

**Your efforts are working.** We deeply appreciate the students, faculty, and staff who are doing the right thing. This has resulted in a significant decline in the number of cases throughout the month of September. Last Friday night, Student Government and the Student Union Board held a

successful movie screening on central campus. They took extra steps to restrict grass seating to ensure physical distancing and have readily available hand sanitizer stations. This is one great example of the creative ways our students are socializing and having fun while keeping themselves, our campus, and community safe.

We're nearly halfway through the semester, and your efforts to support health and safety will allow us to successfully finish out the semester on Nov. 25.

Wendy Wintersteen  
President

Erin Baldwin  
Associate Vice President for  
Student Health and Wellness  
and Director of Thielen Student  
Health Center

Kristen Obbink  
COVID-19 Public Health  
Coordinator