



Student Success Starts Here

SAFE RETURN TO CAMPUS PLAN



As of September 2, 2022 – Please Note: This document is a work-in-progress and is subject to updates as soon as updated state and federal guidelines are communicated to us.

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Introduction

For our return to campus, constituents of the Middlesex Community College community created this “Safe Return to Campus” Plan. This plan strives to keep Middlesex students, faculty, staff, and community members safe when they are visiting our Bedford and Lowell campuses.

Understanding that information and protocols surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic are subject to constant changes, Middlesex will continually update this document using guidelines from the State of Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), among other reputable sources. This document may change without notice based on the recommendations and requirements of federal, state, and local governments, the CDC, DPH, and other college constituents, including the college’s Emergency Management Team, and MCC faculty and staff. As each area of the college will have their own specific needs, we understand that this document cannot be all encompassing and is not finite in its content.

Middlesex has resumed full on-campus operations to welcome back students to the campuses. This document details MCC’s general plan for continuing to be safe on campus for all students, faculty, staff, and community members. With this plan as a foundation, individual departments may have additional needs or information that can be worked out with assistance from Human Resources.

MCC’s seven modalities of teaching offer students flexible course formats that best fit their schedule. Teaching modalities are specially assigned to each course depending on what works best for student learning and safety.

- **Online and On-Campus Lecture** – These hybrid (blended) classes combine on-campus and online instruction.
- **Online and On-Campus Lab** – These hybrid (blended) classes combine online instruction and on-campus labs.

- **Lecture** – This is a traditional on-campus face-to-face course. Classes meet weekly on campus with students and instructors.
- **Lecture and Lab** – This is a traditional on-campus face-to-face course and lab. Classes meet weekly on campus with students and instructors.
- **Online with Class Meeting Times** – This is a fully online class format with scheduled meeting days and times. Students must be online during scheduled meeting times.
- **Online with No Class Meeting Times** – This is a fully online class format. There are no scheduled meeting days or times. Lectures, lessons, and exercises are completed online over the course of the semester.
- **Hyflex** – Students may choose to attend class in person or virtually. Dates and times of course meetings are listed in the course syllabus. Hyflex courses have scheduled meeting times

In order to ensure a safe and welcoming environment, MCC's return to campus requires cooperation from all community members.

Maintaining a Safe Campus Environment

Please review the following information to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission on both Middlesex campuses. These standards are designed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission to employees and students, and are applicable to all sectors and industries.

In order to maintain hygiene safety best practices, Middlesex Community College will adhere to the standards set by the Commonwealth and other reputable sources, as summarized below.

Precautions Being Practiced

Behavioral Signage

Signage is posted in noticeable places and includes reminders such as – but not limited to – wash your hands, self-check for symptoms, get vaccinated, and stay home if you are sick.

Hygiene Protocols

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community, proper hand hygiene remains essential.

- Additional hand sanitizing stations have been added throughout campus in areas deemed appropriate.
- “Self-service” cleaning stations are set up throughout campus. Open-top trash receptacles are available to discard cleaning materials.
- Where applicable, each employee should have their own keyboard, mouse, and desk phone that are not shared; or wipe with disinfectant to clean after each shared use. Shared items, such as department coffee makers, microwaves, water coolers, etc. are to be used at the employee’s own risk. It is recommended that only non-perishable food items are brought to campus. If shared refrigerators must be used, ensure items are kept separated from others’ items. Only disposable plates, utensils, etc. should be used and disposed of promptly.

Handwashing

- Hands should be washed frequently for a minimum of 20 seconds with soap and water.
- Hands should be dried with a paper towel, to be thrown away after use.
- If soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol can be used. Hand sanitizer will be available at various locations throughout the campuses for use.

Mask Optional

MCC is a mask optional institution. The college's successful vaccine mandate, combined with the declining rate of positive cases in Massachusetts, has allowed Middlesex to make this change. All students, faculty, staff, community members, and visitors have the right to choose whether or not they wish to continue wearing a mask while on-campus in all spaces and classes, in both Bedford and Lowell. Through all of our various methods of communicating, we have heard that not everyone may be in complete agreement as to the timetable of our campuses going masks optional. Regardless of anyone's feelings on the matter of masks, we ask you to politely treat one another with civility, kindness, and respect.

From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, MCC has followed health and safety guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as guidelines within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and our local communities. The college will continue to adhere to these guidelines for the foreseeable future in order to keep our community as safe as possible.

Accommodations

Some employees and students may need accommodations for modified protective gear if they wish to continue wearing it. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Non-latex gloves, clear masks for lip-reading ability, gowns for wheelchairs, etc.

- Public Safety, Food Service, faculty teaching students with accommodations, and others may be asked to wear lip-reading masks/face shields.

Accommodations requests shall be submitted to:

Students: Dean of Students at deanofstudents@middlesex.mass.edu

Employees: Human Resources at nicholsr@middlesex.mass.edu

Visitors and vendors found in violation of the current policy will be asked to leave by Public Safety.

Classroom & Learning

In accordance with CDC guidance, it is required that Middlesex Community College students, faculty, and staff who are sick with COVID-19 should not come to campus, should isolate, and notify their health provider and [MCC's Emergency Management Team](#). Those who have recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 should monitor for symptoms and wear a mask indoors. For more information, read [MCC's COVID-19 Contact Decision Tree](#). However, the requirement to stay home may impact a student's class participation, which often has implications for their course grades. Faculty are responsible for outlining attendance expectations in their syllabi and students are responsible for communicating attendance issues with their instructors with as much notice as possible.

The Safe Return to Campus Plan requires a daily self-evaluation of symptoms prior to arriving on campus. Individuals should not assume or diagnose any visible symptomatic behavior of others.

- Faculty and staff should encourage students to stay at home if they feel sick or have any of the [symptoms of COVID-19](#). During this hiatus, please reconsider attendance policies so they do not appear to incentivize sick students coming to campus.
- Students who need to miss one or more classes due to illness or the need to quarantine/isolate are responsible for emailing their course instructor as soon as possible.
- Students are responsible for understanding their individual instructors' policies and expectations regarding attendance and completing any work that they might miss due to illness or the need to quarantine/isolate, including assignments, quizzes, tests, and exams.
- If a student or employee is concerned about their safety in any circumstance (including someone's symptomatic behavior), they can remove themselves from the situation and contact Public Safety. (Note: Faculty who choose to leave class should dismiss class prior to departure).

Space Activities

Laboratory/Clinical, Humanities Faculty & Students Returning

Labs and clinics, as well as theater, art, and music programs have returned in full for students to complete coursework (Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Dental Assisting, Biotechnology, Chemistry, etc.) and adhere to campus guidelines in place.

- Each lab/clinic follows a plan that addresses their specific areas and requirements.
- MCC has an adequate supply of PPE and disinfecting supplies for each classroom and student needs.
- Plexiglass and dividers have been installed in labs and clinics.
- Reasonable accommodations will be made for students who have requested one through the Dean of Students office.

Clinical/Lab faculty and students may need to wear appropriate PPE relative to the specific program. This will vary based on circumstances and may include, but is not limited to, a combination of the following:

- Face mask, gloves, face shield, gown, shoe coverings, and hair coverings.
- Each department will work with the Emergency Management Team to order and supply PPE for in-lab/clinic use.

Service-Learning & Internships

Students participating in Service-Learning and/or Internships may need to wear appropriate PPE relative to the specific site in which they are working. This will vary based on circumstances, and students are expected to follow protocols at their specific site.

Middlesex Special Events

Middlesex Community College has resumed offering events on-campus for vaccinated community members. On- and off-campus MCC sponsored events and programs open to unvaccinated guests will be considered on an individual basis and may require additional health and safety measures.

Facilities & Cleaning

We will continue to provide enhanced cleaning measures to our students and staff. Common areas and restrooms are being sanitized more frequently, and sanitization products will be available upon request.

Cleaning Procedures

Middlesex has secured sufficient cleaning products, supplies, and equipment. We are prepared to disinfect all common surfaces throughout campus at regular, frequent intervals.

- Frequent sanitization will be conducted of high-touch areas throughout the campuses (e.g. light switches, door handles, phones, railings, restrooms, public copiers, etc.).
- Our disinfectant is EPA-approved for COVID-19 effectiveness. It is also certified as non-hazardous and environmentally-friendly.
- Disinfectants and/or cleaning wipes have been provided to each department and classroom.
- Numerous hand sanitizer dispensers are installed and stocked throughout the campus.
- Classrooms are sanitized daily after all classes are done for the day – all desks, chairs, podiums, etc. Disinfection supplies are available in each classroom for use as needed.
- The instructor is encouraged to assist in disinfecting and cleaning the classroom at the end of each class.
- Touchless paper towel and hand soap dispensers have been installed. All hand dryers have been deactivated. Facilities will maintain a frequent schedule of sanitizing restrooms.
- In the cafeteria, hand sanitizer stations are provided, and all surfaces are frequently disinfected.

Open Spaces

Restoration plans are gradually being introduced to meet with gathering capacity protocols for spaces and resources, including but not limited to:

- Vending Machines
- Lounges
- Shuttles
- Fitness Center
- Centers (Multicultural, Veterans Resource, etc.)
- Bookstores
- Lobbies

Disinfecting Buildings After a Positive Diagnosis

If an employee or student that comes to campus is diagnosed with COVID-19, targeted cleaning and disinfecting will be performed.

- When MCC is notified of a positive case, affected areas, rooms, and buildings must be vacated in order to implement cleaning and disinfecting protocols for affected areas.
- Building areas will be temporarily shut down until cleaning is completed and the area is approved as acceptable to reopen.
- Faculty, staff, and students will be updated about classroom and building changes as necessary.

Air Quality

In response to inquiries about air quality in MCC properties, the college conducted an inventory and analysis of current systems. [Click here to read MCC's air quality document provided by service vendor NV5.](#)

Frequent Communication

Middlesex Community College is committed to providing timely updates to our students, faculty, staff, and the community through our regular communication channels and virtual methods. College-wide communication is coordinated through the Marketing & Communications department. These communications include, but are not limited to, periodic updates from the President and Emergency Management Team, postings on MCC's COVID-19 webpage, as well as physical signage installed at both MCC locations. The President and Emergency Management Team may provide regular updates via email, virtual meetings, and video messages.

- Students and employees should continue to regularly check their MCC email, [the Middlesex website](#), MyMCC portal, and the college's social media pages, in addition to other communication venues.
- The [MCC mobile app](#) and [MCCAlert text messages](#) will be used when appropriate.
- [MCC's Return to Campus webpage](#) will continue to be updated.
- Internal programs and services at MCC with social media accounts are encouraged to share MCC's announcements with their followers.

MCC Operating Procedure

Communicable Diseases

A communicable disease is one spread from person to person through direct or indirect contact. Massachusetts law requires medical clinicians, laboratories, local boards of health, etc. to inform public health officials of newly confirmed cases of serious communicable diseases. [Click here to read the full list of communicable diseases that must be reported by medical professionals to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the reporting procedure.](#)

Because MCC does not employ any medical professionals in a diagnostic capacity on site, the college is typically notified of a student or employee's diagnosis of a communicable disease from the student or employee, a family member of the student or employee, and/or the DPH. [Click here to view more specific information on MCC's Communicable Disease Protocol.](#)

Communicable Disease Notification Protocol

Identification of Student:

1. Self-Reported to either a doctor/medical facility; or the College or
2. Department of Public Health.

Identification of Employee:

1. Self-Reported to either a doctor/medical facility; or the College or
2. Department of Public Health.

Department of Public Health Contact at MCC:

Patrick Cook
Vice President of Administration
Work: 978-656-3134

Cell: 781-760-4450

Email: cookp@middlesex.mass.edu

Notification to a College Office:

If Human Resources, the Dean of Students Office, or any other MCC office receives notification of COVID-19 exposure of a student, employee, or community member visiting our campus from the Department of Public Health OR the individual, the email should be forwarded to the Emergency Management Team at EmergencyManagement@middlesex.mass.edu.

The employee should reply to the person sending the email notifying them who the college's contact person is and include their contact information. The employee shall also put the following statement in the email: "All further communication regarding this matter should go through the contact listed above." The employee shall copy the contact person on the email.

Interview of Reporting Party:

The person reporting the COVID-19 exposure may be asked to provide the following information:

- Name of individuals exposed
- Contact information including phone, email, and emergency contact
- Class schedule, including campus locations
- Work schedule, including campus locations
- Co-curricular activities, including campus locations

- Any other campus contact
- Meeting schedule of employee
- Date and time of diagnosis, symptoms, treatment, and clearance to return to school or work

Definitions

Communicable Disease

An infectious disease that is spread from person to person or from animal to person. The spread can happen through the air, through contact with contaminated surfaces, or through direct contact with blood, feces, or other bodily fluids.

Communicable Period

The time, usually measured in days, between exposure to an illness and the onset of symptoms.

Quarantine

Restriction of movements and/or action of individuals who are known to have been exposed to, or may reasonably be suspected to have been exposed to, a communicable disease and who do not yet show signs or symptoms of the infection.

Isolation

Restriction of movement and/or action of individuals infected with a communicable disease to reduce the chance of spreading disease. A decision to allow or restrict any campus or classroom activity for students/staff/faculty will include, but is not limited to, the following considerations:

1. The nature of the risk, or how the disease is transmitted
2. The duration of the risk, or how long is the carrier infectious
3. CDC and or the DPH recommendation for prevention
4. The severity of the risk, or what is the potential harm for third parties
5. The probability that the disease will be transmitted and will cause varying degrees of harm to surrounding students, faculty and staff's academic and employment community

Isolation & Quarantine Guidelines

Per protocols provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Middlesex Community College has adopted the following guidelines to monitor campus ISOLATION and QUARANTINE COVID-19 cases:

Isolation or Quarantine: What's the difference?

Quarantine keeps someone who might have been exposed to the virus away from others. Isolation keeps someone who is infected with the virus away from others, even in their home.

Isolation is used to separate people infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, from people who are not infected. People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific "sick room" or area and using a separate bathroom (if available).

Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent the spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from their state or local health department.

I think or I have tested positive for COVID-19 – what now?

- Start wearing a mask and isolate on day zero – the day you test positive or start showing symptoms
- Isolate for five days after day zero
- If symptom free with no fever on day six, you can leave isolation but must continue to wear a mask around others for the next five days

If you have no symptoms and no fever on day six of isolation:

- You can leave isolation

- Continue to wear a mask around others for next five days

What counts as close contact?

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- You had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them)
- You shared eating or drinking utensils
- They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you

For more information, visit Mass.gov's [COVID-19 Isolation and Exposure Guidance for the General Public](#).

Health Protocols

Vaccinations

Along with the 14 other Massachusetts Community Colleges, Middlesex Community College has a vaccination mandate in place for students, staff or faculty. The College has begun tracking vaccinations for students, faculty and staff using current vaccination management programs. Those confidential records will be maintained by Enrollment Services.

All Massachusetts residents ages 5+ are eligible to access appointments.

Middlesex Community College students, employees and the rest of our college community are required to be fully vaccinated. Top health officials for the state and country, the CDC, and our community leaders have all demonstrated that the available vaccines are not only safe but are the most effective way to limit the spread of COVID-19. The vaccines currently being administered have met the Food and Drug Administration's rigorous scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency use authorization, and Pfizer has been fully approved for regular use. Millions of people in the U.S. have already received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines will continue to undergo the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.

Self-Monitoring Responsibility

Employees and students shall self-monitor their health status daily prior to reporting to work at either MCC location. Those who are feeling ill must stay home and should follow the appropriate sick notification procedure, as well as speak with their supervisor/instructor about completing work remotely, if possible. Additionally, employees and students experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should contact their doctor or local urgent care center for further guidance and testing procedures, as necessary.

According to CDC guidance, potential COVID-19 symptoms include, but may not be limited to:

- Fever or chills

- New cough (not related to a chronic condition)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches or weakness
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New nasal congestion or runny nose (not related to seasonal allergies)
- New loss of smell or taste
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

[Please review the CDC's Symptoms of Coronavirus for more information.](#)

Self-Certification

Each time before coming to campus, every employee and student shall self-certify that they are healthy in order to enter either of MCC's locations. Self-certifying includes asking themselves the questions included on the checklists below:

[COVID-19 Daily Checklist](#)

Self-Certification Questions:

- Do you have a fever (temperature over 100.3 degrees F) without having taken any fever-reducing medications?
- Are you experiencing loss of smell or taste?
- Are you experiencing muscle aches?

- Do you have a sore throat?
- Do you have a cough?
- Are you experiencing shortness of breath?
- Are you experiencing chills?
- Do you have a headache?
- Have you experienced any gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, or loss of appetite?
- Have you, or anyone you have been in close contact with, been diagnosed with COVID-19 or been placed on quarantine for possible contact with COVID-19?
- Have you been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by a medical professional or a local public health official?

According to the CDC, a “close contact” is “someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.” If you suspect you are a close contact or have otherwise been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms of the virus, please consider contacting the Emergency Management Team at EmergencyManagement@middlesex.mass.edu.

If you are vaccinated and have been in close contact with a positive COVID-19 case, monitor for symptoms and wear a mask indoors. If you are unvaccinated and have been in close contact with a positive COVID-19 case, do not come to campus and get tested 3-5 days after exposure. For more information, read [MCC’s COVID-19 Close Contact Decision Tree](#).

If any employee answers ‘yes’ to any of the questions above, they should stay home and do the following:

- Contact their supervisor per normal sick notification procedures
- Be encouraged to contact their doctor or urgent care center

- Be allowed to use one's leave time
- If they are not able to use paid time off or would like to discuss other paid leave options, they should contact Human Resources.
- Should an employee report to work sick and another employee is concerned, they should contact their immediate supervisor. The supervisor may reference training guidelines and recognize the need for employees to stay home and take care when they are sick. Supervisors can contact Human Resources for additional information on coaching and training resources as needed for compliance with the guidelines.

If any student answers 'yes' to any of the questions above, they should stay home and do the following:

- Contact MCC's Emergency Management Team
- Be encouraged to contact their doctor or urgent care center
- Contact their instructor to let them know they will not be attending class
- Should a student report to class sick and someone is concerned, they should contact the Emergency Management Team at EmergencyManagement@middlesex.mass.edu.

Exposure Reporting

All information gathered through this process will be maintained confidentially only with MCC's Emergency Management Team, will be separate from personnel files or student records, and shall be used only to assist the college in providing and maintaining a healthy learning and working environment.

Exposure to COVID-19

Should you be informed that you are a close contact to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, MCC follows CDC guidelines. An email should immediately be sent to EmergencyManagement@middlesex.mass.edu.

- Test at least 5 days following the date of their exposure (on day 6) and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 10 days or until they receive a negative test result. They should isolate if they test positive.
- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 10 days following exposure.

[For more information, read the CDC's What to Do If You Were Exposed to COVID-19. Please read a list of available testing sites.](#) Some testing sites are free and do not require insurance.

Please call ahead to confirm.

High Risk Populations

According to the CDC, age increases the risk of COVID-19 infections. Additionally, individuals of any age with certain conditions may have a higher risk for COVID-19 infection.

Individuals are considered at an increased risk if they have any of the following conditions which may include, but are not limited to:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver diseases
- Chronic lung disease (including asthma, COPD, pulmonary hypertension, and others)
- Cystic fibrosis
- Dementia or other neurological conditions
- Diabetes (type 1 or type 2)
- Disabilities
- Heart Conditions
- HIV Infection

- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system)
- Mental health conditions, especially mood disorders and schizophrenia spectrum disorders
- Overweight and Obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of 25 or higher)
- Physical inactivity
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease or thalassemia
- Smoking, current or former
- Solid organ or blood stem cell transplant
- Stroke or cerebrovascular disease
- Substance use disorders
- Tuberculosis

Please [refer to CDC guidance for a complete list](#) of those who might be at higher risk. Students who may fall into these categories may voluntarily reach out to the Dean of Students office regarding accommodations for their return to on-campus learning. Employees who may fall into these categories may voluntarily reach out to Human Resources regarding accommodations for their return to the workplace.

Space & Staffing Protocols

Telework

MCC staff and faculty returned full-time to campus. The college is currently offering a pilot telework program. Further updates regarding telework policies will be shared by Human Resources and incorporated into this document moving forward.

Space Reconfiguration

Middlesex has taken the following initiatives:

- Office Reconfiguration
 - Desks are spaced an appropriate distance apart. Plexiglass barriers have been installed in lobbies, waiting rooms, office welcome areas, and other locations as deemed necessary.
- Food Services
 - The Cafeterias will not be reopening with full services at this time.
- Public Areas
 - In an effort to keep our campus as clean as possible, individuals should always ensure that they sanitize tables before and after use, and throw away their trash.

Employees Working On Campus

- Childcare needs/plans will be taken into consideration.
 - Dependent on schools' reopening plans (full-time, hybrid or remote).
 - Dependent on daycare availability.

- Mail is continuing to be delivered on a regular basis during the week.

Staffing Protocol

Access to the grounds by the public is permitted. If outbreaks reemerge in the MCC service area or among the campus populations, it may become necessary to further reduce staffing, and protocols will then be reassessed.

Potential Outbreak

Surge Response

Preparation for Possible Increased Waves of Infections

1. A sufficient inventory of PPE, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies will be kept on hand and ordered regularly.
2. Policies, protocols, and procedures will continue to be reviewed and updated as necessary.
3. Closing procedures will be in place should the pandemic return at a level deemed necessary for closure by state guidance.
4. MCC will remain focused on being prepared for technology needs of staff and students if remote work is reinstated.

Middlesex is dedicated to the safety and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff, and will be diligent in following the guidelines and protocols set forth in this guide as a model for the protection from COVID-19 and other infections.

References

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

[Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#)

[Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#)

[MCC Safe Return to Campus Webpage](#)