



**Policy No. 4-15**

**Subject: Contagious Diseases**

Last Revised: 07/11/2023

Historical Status: 09/03/2020

Division	Policy Manager	Administrative Supervisor	Reference
Finance and Campus Operations	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services and the Director of Human Resources	Vice President of Instruction and Student Services and the Director of Human Resources	VCCS Policy Section 6.0.8.1

**I. POLICY**

In compliance with Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Policy 6.0.8.1 Contagious Diseases Policy, Virginia Highlands Community College (VHCC) is committed to maintaining, to the extent reasonably possible, a safe environment for all students and employees (the “College community”). The purpose of this policy is to help prevent the spread of contagious diseases through measures that focus on safety, prevention, and education. VHCC will rely on information and guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and local public health officials.

This policy is not intended to cover common illnesses, such as colds and viruses, or upper respiratory infections.

**II. PERTINENT INFORMATION**

- A. The policy applies to all members of the VHCC community, including students and employees, as well as all visitors to the College’s campuses and facilities, including contractors, vendors, and guests.
- B. This policy establishes the principles for planning and responding to an incident and/or outbreak of infectious or communicable disease that affects the college and threatens the life of students, staff or faculty.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Contagious disease: an infectious disease that is spread from person to person through casual contact or respiratory droplets, which may lead to an epidemic or pandemic and threaten the health or safety of the campus community. These diseases include but are not limited to: tuberculosis (TB), measles or German

measles (rubella), certain strains of hepatitis and meningitis, as well as SARS and certain strains of influenza. Other potentially less serious infectious diseases, such as chicken pox, seasonal flu, and pneumonia will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

- B. Epidemic: the occurrence in a community or region of cases of an illness clearly in excess of normal expectancy.
- C. Pandemic: a disease epidemic that has spread across multiple continents or worldwide.

#### **IV. GENERAL GUIDELINES**

- A. Persons who are showing symptoms of, know, or have reason to believe they are infected with a contagious disease should seek expert medical advice and are encouraged to advise local health authorities of a possible public health threat. They must follow the directions of local health authorities in order to prevent the spread of infection and to protect their own health.
- B. This policy applies to all members of the College community, including students and employees, as well as all visitors to the College's campuses and facilities, including contractors, vendors and guests.

#### **V. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY**

- A. The College President has the authority and delegates to the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services and the Director of Human Resources the responsibility to establish procedures to meet the requirements of this policy.

### **APPENDIX**

#### **VI. RELATED STANDARDS, LEGAL CITATIONS, OR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- A. VCCS Policy 6.0.8.1
- B. DHRM Policy 4.52
- C. Code of Virginia Disease Prevention and Control § 32.1-48.01. Definitions ([virginia.gov](http://virginia.gov))

#### **VII. OPERATING REQUIREMENTS**

- A. Students
  - 1. Students who show symptoms of, know, or have reason to believe they are infected with a contagious disease that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, i.e., creates a risk of death or significant injury or impairment, must stay home and must notify the Office of the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services, 276-739-2429.
  - 2. Before returning to VHCC, students who reported having, or who have been diagnosed as having a contagious disease must be free of all symptoms of the disease for at least seven (7) days since the date of first report or diagnosis, or as otherwise recommended by a healthcare provider, the VDH, CDC, or other public health officials. The College may require students to provide written documentation from a healthcare provider or local health department that the

student may return to campus safely, unless state officials advise agencies to not make such requests, in which case students may return after the appropriate period as established by public health officials. This information must be presented to the Dean of Students. All records regarding this medical information must remain confidential and be filed separately from all other general student records and/or personnel files.

3. Students have a responsibility to stay in contact with faculty/instructors regarding their absence and missed class assignments and should contact the appropriate academic dean if they have any difficulties or concerns. The College will provide reasonable accommodations as requested and required by law.

#### B. Employees

1. Employees who show symptoms of, know, or have reason to believe they are infected with a contagious disease that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others must notify Human Resources that they have symptoms associated with the disease. Employees should stay home or leave the workplace if symptoms occur while already present at work.
2. Supervisors have the authority to send employees home if they exhibit symptoms of a contagious disease while at the workplace. Employees will be charged sick or annual leave if sent home.
3. Before returning to VHCC, employees who have been diagnosed as having a contagious disease must be free of all symptoms of the disease for at least seven (7) days since the date of the first report or diagnosis or as otherwise recommended by a healthcare provider, the CDC, or other public health officials. Employees must present written documentation from a healthcare provider that the employee may return to work safely, unless state officials advise agencies to not make such requests, in which
  - a. case employees may return following the appropriate period as established by public health officials. This information must be presented to Human Resources and their supervisor.
4. Employees must comply with all policies and procedures pertaining to sick leave and supervisor notification regarding their eligibility to return to work. The College will provide reasonable accommodations as requested and required by law.
5. Failure to follow a supervisor's directive is considered insubordination and is subject to formal disciplinary action under the DHRM Standards of Conduct.
6. When the State Health Commissioner and the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia declare a Communicable Disease of Public Health Threat as defined in Section 31.1-48.06, et. Sec. Code of Virginia, VHCC employees, as per DHRM Public Health Emergency Leave policy (policy 4.52), are permitted or required to attend to the medical needs of themselves and immediate family members and will be afforded up to the maximum hours of paid leave per leave year as established by DHRM for this purpose.

#### C. College

1. Should any disease reach a pandemic stage, the College will rely on information and guidance from local and state health officials to provide

appropriate information to the College community. College officials may temporarily close the College or a campus, if such closure serves the best interest of the College community.

2. VHCC will inform the College community of plans to provide continuity of operations that will minimize disruption to College operations. Such continuity measures may include requiring and/or permitting employees to transition to temporary telework through a telework agreement; modifying or shifting responsibilities and duties based on College needs and access to the campus; or modifying or altering normal working hours and schedules. Other measures may include implementing new safety and sanitary measures at the workplace based on current and applicable recommendations by the VDH, CDC or any other state or federal agency, and in compliance with any Executive Orders issued that would require such measures. Students and employees will be notified of specific measures and may be asked to acknowledge receipt and understanding of those measures as well as agreement to abide by them.
3. VHCC will consult with local and state health officials to provide any specific instructions for individuals returning to the College following infection of a contagious disease.

D. Visitors, Contractors, Guests, and Third Parties

1. The College reserves the right to limit access to its facilities to any third parties (visitors, guests, contractors, etc.), in the event of an epidemic, pandemic or any outbreak of a contagious disease that alters normal business operations. The College may institute additional safety measures based on the recommendations of public health officials that would be applicable to third parties visiting or working on campus.

E. Confidentiality

1. No person, group, agency, insurer, employer, or institution should be provided any medical information without the prior specific written consent of the student, employee, or other College community member unless required or allowable under state and/or federal law. Furthermore, all medical information relating to contagious diseases of students, employees, or other College community members will be kept confidential, according to applicable state and federal law. Medical information relating to contagious diseases of persons within the College community will only be disclosed to responsible College officials on a need-to-know basis.

F. Non-Discrimination/Harassment

1. Discrimination or harassment of employees having or regarded as having a contagious disease is prohibited.

G. Sanctions

1. Students who fail to comply this policy and applicable state and federal laws are subject to sanctions in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.
2. Employees who fail to comply with all applicable VHCC, VCCS, and DHRM policies and procedures, and applicable state and federal laws may be subject to formal disciplinary action.