

Change in COVID-19 testing & student isolation information

Bennington College -
Communications <communications@bennington.edu>
to me

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PM

TO: Students, Staff, Faculty

FR: Dr. Randy Anselmo, Director, Student Health Services

I am writing to update the community that we currently have a student in isolation for possible COVID-19 monitoring. While the student has no identifiable risk factors for having contracted COVID-19, their symptoms were consistent enough with it to warrant this step. Following the revised guidelines from the Vermont Department of Health (VT DOH), the student has not been tested; and current practice is to treat people who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 *as though* they have COVID-19.

The VT DOH's revised advice is that COVID-19 testing is no longer recommended unless an individual's symptoms are severe enough to require hospitalization, and we have adapted our strategy in light of that advice.

This may mean that students who don't actually have COVID-19 will have to go into isolation; we will likely not be updating the community every time, but wanted to share now, given the change in guidelines and any concern on campus.

What happens in isolation

Students in isolation will receive the same treatment as is currently recommended by the CDC for confirmed COVID-19 until medically cleared to leave isolation.

Isolation will be carried out in one of many rooms on campus that have been designated for this purpose, with a private bathroom and meal delivery. I will be checking in daily with all students who are in isolation, providing medical care as needed, and arranging transfer to the hospital for anyone with symptoms that suggest the need for a higher level of care than can be provided on campus. Once these students have been released from isolation, you can be assured that they have been medically cleared and are able to resume communal living in student housing.

Guidance for other students

All students who are placed in isolation will be asked to identify "[close contacts](#)." Those individuals will be contacted directly with information and instructions. If you are not contacted, you were not identified as meeting the close contact definition and should continue standard social distancing and prevention guidelines.

Close contacts will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days. If they do not have symptoms, the student can self-isolate in their assigned room. Housing staff will be in touch with the student to assign them a specific bathroom for use and arrange for meal delivery. If a student becomes symptomatic during self-isolation, they should contact [Health Services](#) right away for an assessment and advisement regarding their situation.

Facing isolation can feel very daunting, and one's first impulse may be to keep quiet about symptoms in order to avoid it. However, it is critical - and ethically imperative - to the health of the community that students with respiratory symptoms report their symptoms and comply with our request that they isolate according to best practices.

The best prevention and protection from COVID-19 continues to be to prevent exposure to the virus. We ask all community members to continue to seriously observe these [prevention guidelines](#) and thank you for your continued partnership to keep our community healthy and safe.