



Department of Health

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

SALLY DRESLIN, M.S., R.N.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

February 13, 2020

Dear University/College Administrator:

Recently, a new (novel) coronavirus - 2019 Novel (New) Coronavirus (nCoV), now known as COVID-19 was detected in China that has not been previously found in humans. This coronavirus can lead to fever, cough and shortness of breath. There are thousands of confirmed cases in China, including cases outside of Hubei Province, the epicenter of the virus, and additional cases being identified in a growing number of countries internationally, including the United States. There are ongoing investigations to learn more about this virus. **At present, there are no cases in New York State, including New York City.**

The Department of Health has held several webinars for health care providers, local health departments and higher education administrators and medical staff. Recently, we have become aware that some colleges or universities have implemented movement restrictions and monitoring on some of their students without the involvement of the Department or the local health department (LHD) where the institution is located. **Colleges and universities should not implement any restrictions without consultation with their LHD.** Concerns about novel Coronavirus should focus on public health and safety NOT used as an excuse for anti-Asian racism or xenophobia. In New York State, we stick together when we face a challenge. Public health works best when all communities support one another.

Each case must be evaluated and discussed with your LHD on a case-by-case basis. The LHD will work with the college or university to individually assess the risk of exposure to nCoV and if indicated, facilitate implementation of the appropriate monitoring and/or movement restriction. Implementation will include an evaluation of the residential setting to determine if it is appropriate. If it is not appropriate, the LHDs will ensure the individual has a suitable, alternate location. LHD staff will also assess any personal needs, provide education about how to prevent spread, and develop an action plan for what to do if the person becomes ill. The college or university should discuss with the LHD possible appropriate accommodations, addressing personal needs, and the action plan. This is particularly important if a student becomes ill and meets the criteria to be a Person Under Investigation (PUI) for nCoV (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>), since these students would need to be transported to a health care facility in a manner that is safe and ensuring that all infection control precautions are taken into account.

LHD contact information is available on the Department's website at https://www.health.ny.gov/contact/contact_information/. Institutions who are unable to reach their LHD and who have an urgent matter can contact the NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at 518-473-4439 during business hours or the NYSDOH Public Health Duty Officer at 1-866-881-2809 evenings, weekends, and holidays. The Department will continue to engage with colleges and universities on future webinar and question and answer sessions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard Zucker M.D." in a cursive style.

Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner of Health