



**Draft - August 2020**  
**HIGH MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE**  
**COVID-19 OPERATIONS GUIDANCE**



**All material in this document is subject to changes and updates.**

## HMI COVID-19 Reopening Plan Summary

The HMI approach to running programs in the COVID-19 era revolves around a “closed circuit” strategy in which students can live, interact, and engage in the HMI experience while minimizing risks of the virus reaching campus. Similarly, if the HMI community does have a case of COVID-19, we hope to mitigate the spread of it within the school and into the local community of Lake County. The following is a summary of our extensive plan, which has received support from the Lake County Department of Public Health and our physician advisor, who is also the health advisor to Lake County. It will change as state and local public health orders and advisories continue to change, but we believe we will be able to implement this plan under more restrictive scenarios.

### Transmission Mitigation

- **Excellent Hygiene:** promote frequent hand washing and other cleaning and disinfection of surfaces.
- **Health Checks:** check students and staff regularly for COVID-19 symptoms.
- **Masks/PPE:** wear masks and other PPE in in classes, large group meetings, etc.
- **Social Distancing (of those outside closed circuits):** stay further than 6 feet from each other unless using a cloth face covering.

- **Closed Circuits:**

Due to the nature of our programming, it will be difficult to maintain adequate social distance within student groups and at times between staff and students. For this reason, we will implement a “closed circuit” strategy.

- **Closed Circuit Pods:** Small groups of 8-12 students that operate as a group where individuals are not socially distanced (typically from the time they arrive at the airport until after the first expedition). There will be three to five separate pods depending on the program. If two pods interact with each other, HMI will require social-distance strategies and other transmission mitigation guidelines.
- **Closed-circuit Community:** A group of up to 50 students that lives together with limited social distancing (typically after the first expedition and negative testing).

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### Timeline

- Two Weeks Prior to Program: Students and staff (from across the US) encouraged to maintain strict social distancing and other risk mitigation measures, including getting tested within one week of travel if available.
- Day 1



- Students are picked up from the airport in pods and driven to campus, where a COVID-19 test is conducted.
- Students share lodging and eat meals with only members of their pod.
- Staff are socially distanced from students.
- Day 4 (approximately) - Expedition
  - Students begin expedition in their pods.
  - If field instructors receive a negative result on a recent COVID viral test, they become part of the student pod. If instructors have not been recently tested, they will remain socially distanced from students and other staff.
- Day 14+
  - Students return from the expedition and are tested for COVID-19 (if applicable).
  - Students remain in their pods.
- Day 17-20 (or when test results return) and beyond (if applicable)
  - Students become a closed-circuit community
  - Students have limited interactions with individuals outside the HMI community.

#### **For Symptomatic Individuals or those with Positive Tests**

- Students or other persons who test positive on day one (or any other time) will be quarantined in a location independent from the rest of the community for 14 days unless advised otherwise by a physician.
- Students or other persons exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms will be immediately separated from the community and given a viral test. They will stay removed from the community until test results return (typically 2-5 days). Individuals can return to the community after they have a negative test result and symptoms subside.
- On expeditions, individuals who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms that trigger our evacuation protocols will be taken to a trailhead on foot. If COVID-19 symptoms first present at night, the sick individual will be given a separate shelter.

## Closed Circuit Pod Operations (First 3-5 Days on On-Campus)

**Closed Circuit On-Campus Pods:** Small groups of up to 12 students that operate as a group where individuals will not be socially distanced, as this will not always be practical. HMI will create three to five separate pods, depending on the number of students in a program. If members of two different pods interact, they will do so using social-distance guidelines. Students will remain socially distanced from staff (unless staff have been tested and always remain distanced from those outside the pod) and have extremely limited interactions with individuals beyond the HMI Community.

## Closed-Circuit Pod Operations - Expedition

**Closed Circuit Expedition Pods:** Small groups of 8-12 students that operate as a group where individuals are not socially distanced. Students remain socially distanced from staff (unless staff are tested and remain distanced from those outside the pod) and have extremely limited interactions with individuals beyond the HMI Community.

### *Instructors or Others not in the Closed Circuit Pod*

For a variety of reasons it is possible that some members of an expedition may not be able to be part of the closed circuit pod. These individuals should follow these transmission mitigation guidelines:

- Sleep in their own shelter.
- Avoid cooking for others or if they have to, wear gloves and a mask.
- Endeavor to remain six feet from others if not wearing a mask. Practice excellent hygiene.

## Closed-Circuit Community Operations (If applicable, Semester and Gap only)

**Closed Circuit Community:** An entire group of roughly 50 students and supporting adults that live together when regular social distancing is not practical (typically after the first expedition and an additional test). Students remain socially distanced from staff (unless staff are tested and remain distanced from those outside the community) and have extremely limited interactions with individuals beyond the HMI Community.

### Classes and Activities

- Classes and activities are conducted in person by a socially distanced staff
- Whole community meetings are conducted with socially distanced staff

## Isolation & Quarantine Protocols

The isolation and quarantine protocols dictate responses to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the event that an employee or student has been diagnosed, has positive symptoms, or has been in contact with someone with a COVID-19 diagnosis. If an employee or student tests positive for COVID-19, or symptoms are severe with or without a positive test, isolation protocols are to be followed. These protocols will be followed until dictated otherwise by HMI Leadership. These protocols apply on campus or on expedition.

**CDC Quarantine Definition:** *Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others.*

**CDC Isolation Definition:** *Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus (those who are sick with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. In isolation, 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).*

Links to CDC Guidance: [Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines](#), [Steps to take if you are Sick](#)

### Care of Students - Returning to the Closed Circuit

- Students or other persons that test positive will be isolated in a location independent from the rest of campus for 14 days unless advised otherwise by a physician.
- Students or other persons exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms will be immediately separated from the community and taken to the doctor for testing. After going to the doctor they will stay removed from the community until test results return (typically 2-5 days). Individuals can return to the community/expedition after they have a negative test result and all symptoms have subsided.

### Isolation and Quarantine Communications Plan

- The director of the program will be in charge of direct communication with the sick student’s parents/guardians.
- HOS is in charge of broad community-wide communication in the event of a positive test result
- Daily updates on the group and symptomatic student will be reported

### Isolation and Quarantine of Employees

In the event that a staff believes they or another employee has COVID-19 symptoms or they live with someone who has symptoms, the following protocol will be enacted:

- The employee will self-quarantine immediately. If in the field they will remove themselves at least 10 feet from the group, and wear PPE.

- The employee will contact their supervisor and a decision will be made if quarantine is necessary.
- The employee will make an appointment to be tested.
- In the field, the instructor will self-evac to be tested, and co-instructors will sanitize all group gear and high touch surfaces.
- Until test results are available and symptoms have subsided:
  - The employee will self-quarantine at home.
  - If in-field, the employee will be provided a vehicle to drive themselves out of field and will sanitize it afterwards.
  - The employee may be able to work remotely depending on symptom severity.
  - Employees that live with the symptomatic individual should consider alternative housing.
  - The employee will remain in quarantine until cleared by the physician advisor, whose guidance will factor in test results for COVID-19 if applicable.

## Other Topics

### Pre-Program Screening

- HMIs consulting physician has advised that no additional COVID-19 comorbidity screening is necessary as students are not old enough to have comorbid conditions.
- A follow-up email two weeks prior to the program start will be sent to families asking for any medical issues since the time they submitted their med form (including COVID-19 or testing).
- A follow-up email will be sent the day before travel to remind students not to travel if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or if it is likely that they have come in close contact with an individual that has COVID-19

### Testing Overview

Based on current recommendations of public health experts and physicians, we will follow the testing plan outlined below. (The plans may change as public health recommendations do.)

- **One week before travel to campus (or earlier if test results are delayed)** students will be highly encouraged to get tested so that they have results before traveling (a positive test would result in a delay in joining the program). If the student's family is having difficulty obtaining a test, HMI can help them to find a place to get tested. HMI will also purchase this test for the student if needed. If a student is unable to get a test before the program, they will remain socially distanced from others until they get the results of the test given on the first day of the program.

- **Test day one** on arrival to the HMI campus. Tests conducted by the consulting HMI physicians' staff. Test results received day 3-10. See Isolation/Quarantine Protocols for what happens if tests are positive.
- **If applicable, Test day 14-17** to catch any cases that could have developed in the previous two weeks.
- **If applicable, Test results received day 17-20.** If applicable, all students that receive negative results or positive IgG result can join the closed circuit community.

### **Short Duration Leave for Students**

The time that it takes to get students into a closed circuit will make it unlikely that they can return to their program if they leave. Exceptions must be approved by the Director of Risk Management. Injured students will be required to remain in HMI care if they want to continue with programming.

### **Student Positive Participation Requirement**

HMI is devoting significant time and energy to mitigating risks of COVID-19. Because of this we have limited bandwidth working with students that have motivational/behavioral issues or who provide any push-back to transmission mitigation strategies.

- Any students with motivational/behavioral issues will be put on a strict behavior improvement contract and will be asked to leave the program if the terms of the contract are not met.
- Students will be asked to leave the care of HMI within 48 hours of program withdrawal.

### **Hygiene, Campus Cleaning, and Disinfecting Guidelines (if applicable)**

- HMI students and staff will endeavor to use the [CDC recommendation](#) for excellent hygiene.
- HMI will endeavor to clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces and door handles three times per day with a bleach solution. Also, see [CDC Cleaning and Disinfection guidelines](#).
- While students are in closed circuit pods they will clean commonly used surfaces and door handles after they use common areas (dining hall, bathrooms at night, classrooms, vehicles, etc).
- While students are in a closed-circuit community, they will clean commonly used surfaces and door handles three times per day typically after designated classes or activities.

## Contributors

Many thanks to the scores of people outside of our school who contributed to this document, especially our physician advisor, Dr. Lisa Zwerdlinger, and our legal counsel, Steve Kelly, esq. We are also grateful for the substantial contributions of Dr. Sandra Morris, Dr. Richard Tillyer, Dr. Marcie Tyre Berkley (Ph.D), Dr. Pardis Sabeti, and Jabe Blumenthal, all of who contributed to the ideas and plans contained herein. We are also thankful for the thoughts and plans of Jeff Cheley of Cheley Colorado Camps and the New Vision Wilderness Therapy-Northwoods program.

