

**UNMHSC Return to Full Research and  
Laboratory Activities – (5/29/2020;  
7/1/2020; 9/21/2020; 11/16/2020;  
11/18/2020; 1/29/2021; Most Recently  
Updated 6/7/2021)**

Departments across the UNM Health Sciences Center have been implementing a phased return to campus as necessary. Beginning August 1st, with the return of students to in-person classes, all Health Sciences buildings will no longer require badge access during normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday – Friday. As a result, many areas will require more staff on site to provide office hours.

Many research labs maintained some level of functionality during the pandemic as research was determined to be an essential activity. Even so, as the HSC transitions back to full operations, there will be an increase in activity and foot traffic in all labs. To ensure a safe transition and work environment, supervisors must ensure all employees and visitors follow these COVID-19 Safe Practices:

1. Prior to returning, all UNM Health Sciences Center employees must complete the [Bringing Back the Pack](#) training available in Learning Central. This training will appear as an assignment in each employee's Learning Central plan, similar to the annual mandatory trainings.
2. Employees who are able to work effectively from home may seek permission to do so from their supervisor.
3. Screening – Currently we will continue to respond to the HSC Daily Symptom Attestation survey and remind staff to stay home when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath) or if you have been exposed to the virus.
4. Distancing – continue reducing the proximity or density of employees and provide barriers, especially in open/crowded work areas; promoting and maintaining a safe physical distance in all work/common areas based on current guidelines set by the state's [Public Health Order](#).
5. Masks –Face masks are required in all patient care areas (clinics, hospitals, mixed use spaces and clinical trial spaces), regardless of which building the patient care area is located, and by all unvaccinated faculty, staff, and students. Please refer to the [Return to Full Operations Guidance for General Administrative, Faculty and Staff Offices, and Business Areas](#) for a list of mixed areas. Follow all posted signs. Masks are not required for fully vaccinated individuals except in patient care areas (clinics, hospitals, mixed use spaces and clinical trial spaces) and mixed areas.
6. Hygiene – washing one's hands regularly and covering coughs or sneezes with tissue or arm.

7. Cleaning surfaces in personal and shared offices/breakrooms regularly with effective cleaning supplies.

UNM and Health Sciences have centralized access to mental health resources at [mentalhealth.unm.edu](https://mentalhealth.unm.edu). The [Manager's Guide for Staff Failure to Comply with COVID-Safe Practices](#) to provide supervisor's with a resource on how to manage noncompliance with COVID Safe Practices.

### **Daily Symptom Attestation:**

All HSC employees must complete the daily Symptom Attestation survey. HSC operates 24/7 and daily attestation when coming to campus or reporting to another worksite location is mandatory, even when outside of normal business hours and on weekends. Supervisors can expect to receive the 3-day no response report when employees fail to complete the survey for three consecutive days, but if aware of special circumstances, no action is required.

### **Supervisor Guidelines for Possible or Confirmed Exposures:**

Supervisors who have a confirmed or possible positive COVID-19 exposure in your area, please follow the guidelines provided in the appropriate checklist:

1. [HSC Checklist for Confirmed COVID-19 Exposure](#)
2. [HSC Checklist for Possible COVID-19 Exposure](#)

### **Physical Distancing in the Laboratory and Research Spaces:**

For all in-person meetings, please ensure that seating meets participation restrictions set by NM DOH and the state's [Public Health Order](#) and that notices related to face masks and physical distancing are visibly posted. Please have hand sanitizer available to the attendees. Departments should have cleaning protocols in place to wipe down tables and chairs between meetings. For meetings with more than 10 attendees, please utilize Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or other video conferencing software as much as possible. When utilizing web conferencing technology, be sure you understand the privacy considerations relative to the type of information you are sharing and apply the recommendations appropriate to your meetings. Zoom recommendations can be found [here](#). It is recommended that all documents needing review and/or signatures continue to be routed via email or by other electronic routing/signature software such as Adobe Sign. Information on how to sign up and use the Adobe Sign service can be found [here](#). Adhere to physical distancing requirements when in common areas such as breakrooms, copy rooms, elevators, lobby areas, and restrooms. Guests visiting campus shall wear a cloth face mask and adhere to physical distancing requirements.

## Required Cleaning Procedures:

1. Decontaminate work surfaces and equipment with appropriate disinfectants. Use EPA-registered and approved disinfectants found at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>.
2. Disinfectants should be used with label claims to be effective against SARS-CoV-2. Follow manufacturer's recommendations for use, such as dilution, contact time, and safe handling. For example, you may use **EPA registered disinfectants** that contain 10% bleach solutions (0.5% sodium hypochlorite), ethanol /quaternary ammonium or  $\geq 0.5$  hydrogen peroxide. Notify BHC ([TMuller@salud.unm.edu](mailto:TMuller@salud.unm.edu) or [NDonart@salud.unm.edu](mailto:NDonart@salud.unm.edu)) if you are utilizing another disinfectant so that a check of the disinfectant's active ingredients can be evaluated or consult the EPA List N for approved disinfectants against SARS-CoV-2, <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>. Note: IBC/BHC approval is required to work directly with SARS-CoV-2 or known/suspected SARS-CoV-2 samples. All faculty and laboratory managers must ensure their personnel are using aseptic techniques when processing specimens. This includes disinfection of all surfaces and equipment using **EPA registered disinfectants** that contain 10% bleach solutions (0.5% sodium hypochlorite), ethanol /quaternary ammonium or  $\geq 0.5$  hydrogen peroxide, both inside and outside of the biosafety cabinet. BSC surfaces must be rinsed with water 70% isopropanol after applying bleach to prevent metal corrosion.
3. All manipulation of potentially infectious materials must be performed in certified biosafety cabinets per standard BSL-2 or BSL-3 requirements or as approved by institutional biosafety committee or biosafety officer.

## Required Personal Protective Equipment:

1. **Please refer to the CITI Training Modules *Prevention Strategies*.** The modules will be accessed via the Learning Central system: <https://learningcentral.unm.edu/>. Detailed instructions for accessing the modules can be found at the end of this document.
2. Per OSHA requirements and biosafety policies, all lab staff should have dedicated PPE within your laboratory for your experiments, including lab coats and appropriate facial protection.
3. Per UNMHSC Biosafety Training for BSL-1 and BSL-2 laboratories, do not wear PPE outside of the non-lab areas. Depending on the number of labs you have and the nature of the work, researchers may need multiple lab coats for each area to avoid potential cross contamination. Wear a lab coat or solid-front back-fastening gown, preferably with a knit or grip cuff. For BSL-2 and BSL-3 activity, overage of the wrists is very important. Avoid using an open-cuff lab coat inside a biosafety cabinet as aerosols generated inside the cabinet will contaminate your jewelry, wrists and forearms as well as the inside of the lab coat cuff.

4. For BSL-2 activity, ensure that your gloves extend over the sleeve of your lab coat. An opening at the wrist will allow aerosols generated within the biosafety cabinet to contaminate your wrist and forearm, extending to your elbow. Sleeve covers can be worn to ensure coverage of the wrist and will also minimize contamination of the sleeves of your lab coat.
5. Each person in the lab should have their own pair of safety glasses. These can be sanitized after each use with 70% isopropanol and allowed to air dry. Wear a chin-length face shield or safety glasses and a mask if working outside of the biosafety cabinet with biohazards on the bench. This will protect the researcher's facial mucous membranes from exposure in the event a spill outside the biosafety cabinet during transfer of material to and from the incubator.
6. Follow all posted signs. Face masks are required in all patient care areas (clinics, hospitals and clinical trial spaces), regardless of which building the patient care area is located, and by all unvaccinated faculty, staff, and students. N95 masks and other high demand PPE must be used only when appropriate and required for the laboratory environment and experiment. Cloth face coverings should be sanitized often. This can be accomplished by machine washing.
7. Remove PPE before leaving the laboratory. Placing a hook within the lab area will facilitate this requirement.
8. Any questions that researchers may have regarding proper use of PPE in their specific situation, they should follow standard procedures for biosafety as outlined in our "Biosafety Training for BSL-1 and BSL-2 laboratories." This includes not wearing gloves outside of the laboratory. If there are any questions regarding proper BSL-1 or BSL-2 training or use, please review your learning central training or contact the Office of Research Biosafety Team ([TMuller@salud.unm.edu](mailto:TMuller@salud.unm.edu) or [NDonart@salud.unm.edu](mailto:NDonart@salud.unm.edu)).

### **Clinical Research and related Human Participant Research:**

The possibility of COVID-19 infection will still be present after resuming research operations. This is part of the "new normal". Investigators and the HRRC should re-evaluate research protocols and develop plans to manage. Human subjects participating in clinical research are often more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to pre-existing conditions. It is important to maintain strict compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols in order to protect this vulnerable population.

Studies with in-person procedures that were originally considered minimal risk (e.g., interviews, focus groups, blood draws, etc.) may need re-consideration as greater than minimal risk, due to the risk of COVID-19 infection. The risk-benefit analysis for a protocol may have shifted. The adequacy of provisions to minimize risk, to monitor safety, and to protect privacy and confidentiality may need to be re-evaluated. It may no longer be feasible to resume certain research as originally proposed and approved due to facility shut-downs, supply shortages, furloughs, etc.

We understand what a difficult time this has been for all and the importance of the research that is conducted at UNMHSC. We are working hard to identify and address challenges to the conduct of research while protecting our patients, faculty and staff. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

### **Community Based Research Work:**

Community based researchers can resume work in areas outside of the university 30 days after their second vaccination. When engaging external communities through inperson visits, continue to reduce exposure risk by including some of the following steps:

1. Wear a mask at all times.
2. Continue reducing the proximity or density of employees and provide barriers, especially in open/crowded work areas; promoting and maintaining a safe physical distance in all work/common areas based on current guidelines set by the state's [Public Health Order](#).
3. Minimize the number of staff who have "hands on" contact with study participants.
4. Wash your hands before and after contact with participants.

UNM HSC is following the [UNM Health System travel guidance](#). UNM HSC continues to advise against unnecessary travel, both business and personal. Please refer to [Health Sciences' Travel FAQs](#) for additional information.

### **General Health and Safety:**

A significant increase in the population density in our buildings comes with health risks, and we will need to be more vigilant than ever in mitigating these risks, as follows.

3. If a worker feels any signs of illness, no matter how mild, they must not perform work of any kind in research areas. Supervisors who have a confirmed or possible positive COVID-19 exposure in your area, please follow the guidelines provided in the appropriate checklist:
  - a. [HSC Checklist for Confirmed COVID-19 Exposure](#)
  - b. [HSC Checklist for Possible COVID-19 Exposure](#)
4. All personnel working or learning at UNMHSC who test or have tested positive for COVID-19 at an outside facility must self-report the positive COVID-19 test result to the appropriate UNMHSC department and immediately stop working in the research areas and on site. They must enter quarantine at home.
5. To reduce viral transmission between shifts, all research areas should prepare spray bottles containing 10% bleach solutions (0.5% sodium hypochlorite),  $\geq 0.5$  hydrogen peroxide based disinfectants (e.g., PREempt™) or ethanol/quaternary ammonium disinfectants (Virex®, QUATRICIDE®, Lysol® Disinfecting Wipes) to disinfect bench surfaces, door knobs, and equipment surfaces frequently, and at

the beginning and end of a shift. After applying bleach to metal surfaces (1 minute wet contact time), surfaces should be wiped down with water or 70% isopropanol to prevent metal corrosion.

6. Wash hands with soap regularly throughout the day, especially after removing gloves. Remove gloves before leaving the lab. Gloves should not be worn in hallways, elevators, or offices. If staff must use gloves outside the lab to avoid touching shared surfaces, then use different colored (clean) gloves to differentiate them from lab-use gloves.

### **Animal Resource Facility Research:**

The ongoing ethical care and maintenance of animal populations and/or ensuring the ethical care and conduct of research with animal subjects remains an essential function of the ARF. As research operations involving animals resumes, please consider the following:

1. Research involving animals should be limited to the ARF facility, unless resources required for such research is only available within the PI laboratory and approval for the function is granted by both the IACUC and the initial phase laboratory inspections.
2. The possibility remains that a new phase of public health emergency may create a renewed need to shelter-in-place. Prior to ordering/obtaining new animals, researchers should consider the ramifications on their animal subjects of another rapid ramp-down.
3. Many animal research studies are longitudinal and entail regular follow up of well-characterized cohorts. Delays in regular follow up may lead to data loss, loss of the cohort, and in some instances a failed study (i.e., lack of requisite data to address specific aims) after many years of investment.

### **Instructions for Accessing CITI Training:**

The complimentary CITI courses provide an overview of COVID-19, prevention strategies, recommended laboratory practices, and points to consider as students, staff, and faculty move forward to a return to activities and operations within medical school and research institution settings.

**The required modules plus the research modules applicable to the work of the student must be completed prior to returning to campus to work.** These modules will be replaced by the Bring Back the Pack Training at a later date. The modules will be accessed via the Learning Central system: <https://learningcentral.unm.edu/>.

Select the appropriate link to instructions on the CITI Program Website and follow the steps to complete the course:

1. **Existing Accounts:** If you already have CITI access, please use the course link for Existing Accounts instructions to access the site and add the modules. Detailed instructions can be found here: <https://about.citiprogram.org/en/demo-instructions-for-registered-citi-program-accounts/>.
2. **New Accounts:** If you need to setup CITI access, please use the course link for instructions to create New Accounts to access the site and add the modules. Detailed instructions can be found here: <https://about.citiprogram.org/en/demo-instructions-for-new-accounts/>.

**Important:** In order to receive course completion credit at UNM HSC, you MUST email an electronic copy of your course completion page (e.g., print to PDF, take a screenshot (PC: Ctrl + PrtScn; MAC: Shift + Command + 3) and save as PNG/ or paste into a word document, etc.) to the registrar at [hscapplicationsupport@salud.unm.edu](mailto:hscapplicationsupport@salud.unm.edu). This documentation also needs to be available to show the Lab Safety Officers for lab inspections.

If you have questions regarding the course, you may contact Rochelle Garcia at the Office of Research at [RorGarcia@salud.unm.edu](mailto:RorGarcia@salud.unm.edu), or you may review the CITI Program's Frequently Asked Questions Page: <https://about.citiprogram.org/en/faqs/>.

**The required modules are:**

### **COVID-19: An Overview**

This module provides an introduction to COVID-19, including an overview of zoonotic infections, coronaviruses, and the symptoms and risk factors associated with COVID-19. The module also provides an overview of how COVID-19 spreads and prevention strategies.

### **COVID-19: Moving Forward**

This module summarizes prevention techniques. Learners are then presented with recommendations for care should they feel that they have been exposed to (or have been diagnosed with) COVID-19. The module concludes with a review of techniques to consider for overall mental health and personal wellbeing.

**Supplemental modules, may be required depending on research responsibilities:**

Supplemental modules focused on topics related to research with human subjects, animal care and use, and working with patients who may be infected or suspected with COVID-19 provide learners the option to review these topics if applicable to their current work or school setting. These modules are also available using this link: <https://about.citiprogram.org/en/series/covid-19-back-to-campus/>.

## **COVID-19: Human Subjects Research**

This module provides an overview of topics related to working with human subjects and in research areas that include human subjects as individuals return to campus.

## **COVID-19: Safe Lab Reactivation (Animal Research)**

This module provides an overview of ramping down and ramping up procedures and recommendations in light of COVID-19 in relation to animal research. The module concludes with a review of “lessons learned.”

## **COVID-19: Working with Patients Infected or Suspected with COVID-19**

This module is a collection of videos that provide an overview of a number of important areas related to working with patients who are infected or suspected with COVID-19. The videos and support materials were created by Nebraska Medicine.

## **COVID-19: Prevention Strategies**

This module reviews transmission information as a foundation for an in-depth review of social distancing guidelines across different settings (public spaces, elevators/stairwells, and laboratories), hygiene best practices, face coverings in general settings. This module concludes with a discussion of cleaning, including cleaning personal workspaces, shared workspaces, and shared workspaces in laboratory settings.

## **Sources**

CDC Infection Control and Disinfection Guidelines

<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/disinfection/disinfection-methods/chemical.html>

CDC Cloth Mask Guidance

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf>

EPA Registry of COVID-19 Disinfectants

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

CDC Guideline for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities

<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/disinfection/disinfection-methods/chemical.html>

Bringing Back the Pack

<https://hr.unm.edu/cv19/return-to-work-training>



HSC Return to Full Operations Guidance

[https://hsc.unm.edu/covid-19/media/documents/final\\_rto\\_updated\\_05-may-20211.pdf](https://hsc.unm.edu/covid-19/media/documents/final_rto_updated_05-may-20211.pdf)

New Mexico Higher Education Department Guidance

[https://hed.state.nm.us/uploads/documents/Higher\\_Education\\_Operations\\_Memo\\_-\\_Summer\\_2021\\_2021.05.pdf](https://hed.state.nm.us/uploads/documents/Higher_Education_Operations_Memo_-_Summer_2021_2021.05.pdf)

New Mexico Public Health Order

<https://cv.nmhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/060221-PHO.pdf>

UNM Health System Travel Guidance

<https://hsc.unm.edu/covid-19/media/documents/unmhealth-system-travel-guidance-5-3-21.pdf>

Office Workspace Checklist (aka, Manager's Checklist)

<https://hsc.unm.edu/covid19/media/documents/manager-checklist.pdf>

HSC Telecommuter Home Office Purchases of Supplies/Equipment/Furniture

[https://mcusercontent.com/59ce53c1a4dedb490bac78648/files/d7a2ef8c-46ae-429f-87f1-1d28b9f87df0/Telecommuter\\_Home\\_Office\\_Purchases.01.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/59ce53c1a4dedb490bac78648/files/d7a2ef8c-46ae-429f-87f1-1d28b9f87df0/Telecommuter_Home_Office_Purchases.01.pdf)

HSC Shipping and Receiving

<http://univserv.unm.edu/>

UNM Staff Return to Campus Guide <https://hr.unm.edu/docs/hr/return-to-campus-staffguide.pdf>

UNM COVID-19 leave options

<https://hr.unm.edu/cv19>

UNM Temporary Increase to Maximum Annual Leave Accruals for Faculty and Staff

<https://hr.unm.edu/docs/hr/annual-leave-temporary-policy-allowance.pdf>

UNM Counseling, Assessment & Referral Services (CARS)

<https://cars.unm.edu/>

UNM Purchasing Department's COVID-19 Health and Safety Procedures

<http://purchase.unm.edu/index.html>

UNM Purchasing Special Exception

<http://pcard.unm.edu/pcard-special-exception-webform/index.html>

UNM Employee Wellness

<https://hr.unm.edu/wellness>

UNM Mental Health Resources

<https://mentalhealth.unm.edu/>

Zoom Web Conferencing Recommendations

<http://at.unm.edu/media-collaborativeapps/zoom-web-conferencing.html>

Adobe Create Campus/Adobe Sign

<https://creativecampus.unm.edu/adobe-sign.html>