

## **IMPORTANT COVID-19 GUIDANCE FROM THE CORTLAND COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Increasing concerns over student housing come amid reports of virus outbreaks across the country and here in Cortland County. Universities are struggling with how to prevent tightly packed student houses from turning into coronavirus clusters.

The majority of students are adhering to campus guidance and are doing exactly what they have been asked to do by the campus. A small number of people, however, have had a large impact on their peers. The Cortland County Health Department urges everyone to take the necessary precautions to stop the spread. Be respectful of each other and our community. If you are directed to quarantine or isolate, you must comply. If you are contacted by a contact tracer, you must cooperate. Failure to do so will likely result in suspension or dismissal from SUNY Cortland. It's that important.

Below is guidance for students who live in a house or apartment off campus to help everyone be healthy and protect our community.

### **Individuals presenting symptoms or with concerns about being exposed should seek testing.**

- If members of a house test positive, there should be **No gatherings and No visitors.**
  - Positive cases should isolate and stay away from everyone in the house who does not have the virus.
  - Isolated individuals should have their own bathroom and their own bedroom.
  - It is okay to place positive cases in isolation together.
- All other members of the household will be quarantined for 14 days and should be separated from the positive cases.
- All members should continue to follow physical distancing, face covering, and hygiene rules.

### **Have a conversation with your housemates. Discuss house rules.**

- Who is allowed in the residence?
- What will physical distancing look like outside of the home for each roommate (indoor/outdoor, with face coverings/without face coverings, distanced/close, strangers/people you've spoken with about risk)?
- How will you transport yourselves around campus and town?
- What unavoidable risks such as workspaces and classrooms do house mates have?
- How frequently will you clean and disinfect your space?
- What will your house guidelines be? See below for sample guidelines to get you started.

### **Suggested house guidelines**

- Limit visitors and guests inside your residence.

- Wash your hands often. Consider agreeing to wash your hands each time you enter your residence, after blowing your nose/coughing/sneezing, after using the restroom, before eating or preparing food, after cleaning.
- Don't host or attend parties or large gatherings. (Remember – it won't be like this forever!)
- Clean and disinfect regularly, especially frequently touched surfaces and objects such as tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, faucet and cabinet handles, devices and remote controls.

### **Kitchen**

- Wash your hands thoroughly before eating and after cleaning.
- Use separate serving dishes – Instead of sticking everyone's hands into a bag of chips, pour a portion into a bowl.
- Use a dishwasher, if possible, to sanitize dishes.

### **Common Areas**

Arrange furniture to facilitate physical distancing. Create reminders about bringing a face covering when you or your roommates leave home.

### **Shared Bedrooms**

Move beds in shared bedrooms so heads of sleepers are as far from each other as possible. Avoid bunk beds if possible.

### **Laundry**

Do your own laundry. If you (generously) help a roommate with their laundry, wash your hands thoroughly afterwards. Remember, face coverings should be washed after each use and can be washed with your regular laundry. Use the warmest setting appropriate for the fabric in your load and regular detergent. Dry face coverings in a dryer on the highest heat or air dry in the sunshine.

### **Shared Spaces**

Some complexes include shared spaces such as laundry facilities, stairwells, elevators, pools, workout spaces, game rooms, etc. Wear a face covering and maintain 6 feet distance between yourself and everyone that you do not live with. In areas that are small – like stairwells and elevators – consider going one at a time.

### **Outdoor Spaces**

These are the best spots for hanging out with friends at a distance. Invest in a lawn chair. Wear a hat or bring a shade umbrella.

### **When Conflict Arises**

Home should feel like a safe space, but there may still be times when a roommate's behavior makes you feel at risk.

Remember to start by reaching agreements about behavior before problems arise. When conflict happens, the first step is still a conversation. Stay calm and...

- Express specific observations about a situation or concern, not your judgments or evaluations. Example: "I saw that you were hanging out with friends without face coverings and were closer than 6 feet from each other. We agreed that we wouldn't do that during the pandemic."
- Disclose your feelings about the situation or concern, i.e. genuine statements about your emotions and sensations, not your beliefs about what you think others have done to you. Example: "I felt scared and exposed when I saw you."
- Identify what you need or value. Example: "I really value shared agreements about behavior – especially during a pandemic."
- Request specific actions that would start to meet your needs or support your values, rather than demanding character changes or making ultimatums. Example: "Would you be willing to revisit our agreements together and update them as needed?"

If your conversation does not go well, you can consult with your RA (if living in a residence hall) or other supportive students and/or adults for guidance and support.

Ultimately you cannot control others' behavior. If your roommate is not behaving in a way that you deem safe, take steps to help yourself by limiting contact as much as possible, avoiding shared spaces, wearing a face covering and asking your roommate to wear a face covering in shared spaces.

### **When someone in your home gets sick**

Students should contact Student Health Services or their health care provider if they experience symptoms of COVID-19 that cannot be attributed to other causes such as allergies.

People with symptoms should...

- Stay home. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Only leave home to get necessary medical care. Before going to Student Health Services or any medical facility, please call the facility first for instructions.
- Separate themselves from others in the residence by staying alone in their specified bedroom, even during meals.
- Use a separate bathroom.
- Not prepare food or serve food to others.
- Not handle pets or other animals.
- Not allow visitors.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others.

Clean and disinfect your residence. Monitor everyone for symptoms. Once a roommate has a confirmed positive test result, all members of the household should quarantine as close contacts.

### **If your roommate is told to quarantine**

If your roommate was a close contact of a person known to have COVID-19 or if they have recently traveled internationally, they may be asked to quarantine. That does not mean that everyone in the residence must also, but it does mean those sharing living spaces with the person in quarantine should stay at least 6 feet apart, wear a face covering, and monitor for symptoms of COVID-19.

### **Remember...**

Everyone can continue to take these steps to stop the spread of COVID-19 in our community:

- Keep 6 feet distance between yourself and others when in public.
- Wear a face covering at all times in public spaces, especially when 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained. Masks and face coverings must be worn by everyone over the age of two at all times in public places when 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained. Businesses must deny entry to anyone who is not wearing a face covering. The City of Cortland may fine individuals who are in violations of these regulations.
- Non-essential gatherings are limited to 25 (fewer is better) people for our region but all present must comply with distancing and face covering guidance.