Modifying Emory’s isolation and quarantine (I/Q) processes

Dear Parents,

Happy New Year to you and your family. It is difficult to believe we are starting another semester impacted by the changing COVID-19 landscape. As we continue this journey with you and your students, know that the Emory community is here for you – navigating the challenges and ultimately moving beyond this pandemic together.

We are at an important moment in the university’s COVID response strategy – and we are writing to share adjustments in that strategy based on the current Omicron variant surge.

President Fenves’ Dec. 28 letter reiterates our steadfast commitment to support the physical and mental health, as well as the safety of our university community. To that end, we are modifying our isolation and quarantine (I/Q) processes to better meet our community’s immediate needs and incorporate new public health guidance. Also, by slowing our return to campus, we are circumventing the potential disruption to academic continuity that the Omicron surge posed. As we closely monitor the latest surge projections and modeling, we all can look forward to a full, in-person return to campus on Jan. 31 when we expect conditions to improve as noted in a more recent message from the president.

Adapting to a changing environment

We know vaccination is still the best protection against serious illness and hospitalization. With a vaccination rate of 98 percent and a booster dose required for students, faculty, and staff by Jan. 19, the risk of severe illness and hospitalization is extremely low for our students, even though the Omicron variant is highly transmissible. But, because it is much less virulent, infections result in mostly cold-like symptoms for those who are vaccinated and boosted.

Based on these facts and others, we have adapted our response in a way that continues to support our students while also creating more sustainable, effective measures in this current COVID environment. This includes anticipating not only how the virus will impact our students, but also our faculty and staff, who may also be affected by the Omicron variant.

If your student is required to isolate/quarantine (I/Q), please know that we understand this is a very difficult period for them and you – and we thank you for understanding Emory’s COVID protocols are necessary to limit transmission and provide important support to those who may be sick or test positive.

Introducing a new I/Q model

Emory’s COVID response continues to evolve based on public health guidance as we move toward a model that is sustainable, scalable, and as minimally disruptive as possible to the
student experience. Two important changes characterize the next stage of the response while supporting those most vulnerable and in greatest need of medical care:

- **Shortened isolation period for everyone:** Emory will align with the changes recommended by the CDC and adjust isolation periods based on the specific clinical situation. Isolation may end as early as day 5, provided the student is asymptomatic or their symptoms have significantly improved. Please see the new Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines on the Student Health Services webpage.

- **Isolation changes for residential students:** Beginning this month, residential students who are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms will receive guidance on how to isolate themselves in their residences. Those who exhibit more severe symptoms or are at higher risk will continue to be placed in I/Q at the Emory Conference Center Hotel (ECCH), which is located on the Atlanta campus near Emory University Hospital, or in separate housing on the Oxford campus.

We understand the new isolate-in-place protocol for students with mild or no symptoms will present a challenge for their roommates and hallmates. Given the shift, it is especially important that your student is boosted to better resist infection. Students will have access to medical advice and care, academic support, dining options, cleaning supplies, and Isolation and Quarantine Coordinators to address concerns. Please keep in mind that all Emory students, including those in I/Q, have 24/7 access to Student Health Services providers.

For up-to-date information on our support services for students in I/Q, please visit the Atlanta campus Student Health Services website or the Oxford campus SHS website. If you have further questions or concerns, please contact:

- **Atlanta campus:** Bridget Guernsey Riordan, Assistant Vice President of Campus Life for Parent and Family Programs, at family@emory.edu or 404-727-6204.

- **Oxford campus:** Kerith Pocock, Oxford Director of Student Health Services, at oxfordshs@emory.edu or 770-784-8376.

As we look forward to bringing our community together for in-person learning on Jan. 31, it is critically important that all members of our university community – students, faculty, and staff – get the required booster dose by Jan. 19. It is equally important that we all continue to comply with the Community Compact for students and the Community Compact for faculty and staff, as well as all other protocols and procedures designed to keep us all safe and help combat this COVID surge.

Working together, we must recommit ourselves to taking care of ourselves and others so we can all look forward to the day when COVID-19 restrictions are no longer needed.

Thank you. For You. For Us. For Emory.
Sincerely,

Sharon R. Rabinovitz, MD
Executive Director
Emory University Student Health Services
Campus Life

Amir St. Clair
Associate Vice President and Executive Director
COVID-19 Response and Recovery
Office of the President

Additional information resources
Emory Anytime Student Health Services
Emory Community Compact for Students 2021-2022
Emory Forward
Emory Student Health COVID-19 Guide
Emory University COVID-19 Dashboard
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
President Fenves’ Jan. 10 Message: First Week of School
President Fenves’ Dec. 28 Message: Spring Remote Start