

Field Response COVID-19 Preventative Practices & Response Plan for Conservation Field Staff

I. Conservation protocols for keeping our community safe and healthy:

A) General Prevention

1. Principles Guiding Our Programmatic Response

- a. **Health and Safety** - VYCC promotes the health, safety and well-being of our crews as our highest priority. These are the primary filters for all decisions. Consider how your actions may impact you and your team.
- b. **Plan Ahead / Be Flexible** - An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Good forethought and planning allows us to respond effectively to anticipated events, as well as those unforeseen. Are you putting enough forethought and planning into your day, work week and planned events with your crew to make sure they are safe? Are you prepared before you start your day so that you can be flexible if challenges arise?
- c. **Communicate Well** - As COVID-19 affects our communities, and as VYCC learns more about an evolving situation, we will communicate any relevant information as quickly as possible. Communicate with each other, your supervisor, and your partners about worksite expectations and needs.

Protocols may change over time, but our principles will be consistent throughout our response. These principles also provide a framework for how to react if you find yourself in a situation unanticipated by specific protocols – stop, and think to yourself ‘are my actions in alignment with our principles,’ before you proceed. A persistent culture of safety will always be more important than any given moment of productivity or efficiency

People can help protect themselves from COVID-19 with everyday preventive actions. Below is a set of instructions on measures we are taking while working:

- Complete office work at home
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Monitor yourself for symptoms before coming to work, including checking temperature. Those with symptoms will not be permitted at work until recommended quarantine or testing has occurred.
- All staff returning to work are required to complete a VOSHA health training and send completion certificate to Admin Manager.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Wash your hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, or comparable meeting CDC guidelines, if soap and water are not available. Be sure to wash/sanitize your hands:
 - Before starting work.
 - After using the bathroom.

- After blowing your nose, sneezing, or coughing.
- Before and after eating.
- After contacting trash receptacles.
- After taking a break.
- Before and after using shared tools.
- After entering and exiting vehicle.
- Before and after any stops to public facilities or stores (bathrooms, gas stations)

B) Thresholds for Program Operation

Field programs, both day and camping crews, will only operate when the following thresholds are met and can be stopped if the altering of any of these factors creates an unnecessarily risky situation

- 1) Organization COVID-19 Protocols are in place: VYCC programs may resume programming when this protocol is in place, is understood by all relevant staff and stakeholders, and we have the resources available to implement this set of protocols.
- 2) Civil Authority Restrictions are lifted: VYCC programs may resume programming when national and/or state Executive Orders allow our program to operate and do not exceed mandated gathering numbers of individuals necessary to operate our program model.
- 3) Medical resources are available for support: It is understood that COVID-19 related demands on our medical infrastructure are an important consideration for three reasons:
 - a. Additional demands on medical facilities/medical personnel may distract from our communities' collective ability to meet the demands associated with COVID-19 and therefore may be irresponsible
 - b. Additional demands may strip the physical/personnel resources away from the communities in which VYCC operates (e.g. medical personnel may lack access to proper PPE) which might make medical care less available, or
 - c. May increase the likelihood of exposure to patients if care is sought. VYCC programs may resume programming if COVID-19 models (<https://covid19.healthdata.org/united-states-of-america/vermont>) and/or other available data indicate that the demand on the medical facilities in the areas in which we operate programs will not be overwhelmed during the times in which our programs are operating.
- 4) Our partners are prepared: VYCC programs may resume programming when our partners are secure and confident enough in their own operations/availability to provide us reasonable assurance that plans, schedules, camping opportunities, etc., won't remain in flux – thereby increasing our opportunity costs, financial risks, and risks to our people.
- 5) It is socially responsible: VYCC programs may resume programming when the organization believes it is socially responsible for us to be operating. We want to offer opportunities when these activities can be done safely, including gaining assurances from

experts, our board of directors, staff, and our larger stakeholder groups that they are comfortable with us going back to work.

- 6) We are prepared: VYCC camping programs may resume programming when:
 - a. We have had the time to recruit and train staff sufficiently;
 - b. We have identified sufficient project/camping partners; and
 - c. We have the physical equipment and supplies to implement our planned activity.

C) Pre-Program isolation and testing requirements

- 1) Program participants traveling from out of state must either:
 - a. quarantine at home for 14 days immediately prior to traveling to Vermont. In route avoid making prolonged stops, avoid gatherings at restaurants, limit gas stops, etc.
 - b. quarantine at home 7 days, receive a negative Covid19 test after day 7, and travel directly to Vermont without breaking the quarantine. Same travel guidelines above apply.
 - c. If traveling by mass transit or through any form with people from multiple households, participants must quarantine upon arrival in Vermont, either for 14 days or for 7 days followed by a negative COVID19 test.
- 2) Program participants traveling from within Vermont and out of state non-quarantine counties as identified by the [Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development](#) who travel in a private vehicle without making prolonged stops, may arrive at VYCC without completing a quarantine.
- 3) All Participants will be tested seven days after arrival to the program

D) Health Screenings

Health Screening for Conservation camping crews will occur:

- 1) During the hiring process, before engagement with our program. The screening will occur after an offer has been made but before employment begins.
- 2) During program orientation/training to identify any existing symptoms
- 3) Daily during any engagement with the program. Daily temperature checks and symptoms evaluations will monitor health and well-being of staff

Hiring Process Screenings

- 1) Applicants will be informed of the potential risks associated with participating in our programs and informed about our COVID-19 protocol and the commitments necessary

for participants to make, including engaging in self isolation outside of the programs dates if necessary

- 2) Applicants must confirm that they have a reliable site at which to self-quarantine within the state of Vermont, and reliable transportation to that site, by their own means or that of their emergency contact. This location and emergency contact will be documented and logged with medical forms
- 3) Applicant will accurately and honestly submit Health and Medical History form for evaluation after receiving an offer and before beginning employment.

Program Orientation/Training Screenings

- 1) The orientation protocols are designed to ascertain if an individual is exhibiting any symptoms of COVID 19, and to determine if each member/leader has properly isolated/tested out before arrival.
- 2) Participants will undergo a private health screening designed to ascertain if they are demonstrating any symptoms which could be related to COVID-19, including
 - a. General Health Screening Questions
 - b. Temperature check (below 100.4 F is required) via “touch less” thermometer will occur each day during orientation
 - c. Observation over the course of Orientation for any health concerns (24-48 hours)
 - d. Assessment of positive attitude regarding general health and observing protocols
 - e. Participants showing any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will not be allowed to engage in programs
- 3) Staff will emphasize the in-field protocol requirements and commitments that participants are making in accordance with those protocols (hand-washing behaviors, quarantine in-place, mask wearing, etc.).
- 4) Leaders and members will complete the [VOSHA health training](#), and send the certificate of completion to the Administration Manager

Programmatic (in field) Screenings

- 1) On-site safety officers will be responsible for conducting daily symptom check before starting work

- 2) Safety officer will ask all employees the following:
 - Have you experienced the following symptoms in the last 24 hours?:
 - Fever (temperature above 100.4 deg F)
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Chills
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Have you been near anyone diagnosed with COVID19 in the last two weeks?
- 3) Safety officer will perform health screenings at the beginning of each day, including taking temperatures with a non-contact digital thermometer, disposable thermometer, or personal thermometer, and complete the Daily Health Screening form.
- 4) Health screenings should be completed out of sight and ear shot of others to maintain confidentiality
- 5) Employees experiencing symptoms should isolate immediately and follow procedure listed in II- A

E) Field Work Protocols

- 1) All leaders will receive a specific training lesson to identify and prevent exposure. Training will highlight signs/symptoms and field observation/monitoring of COVID-19, thresholds for communication, and standards for seeking organizational assistance
- 2) Leaders will act as Safety Officers who monitor and have the authority to stop or modify activities to ensure compliance with these mandatory health and safety requirements
- 3) Fill up on gas locally before site visit to minimize contact outside of your regular community
- 4) Everyone must wear masks while inside a vehicle unless driving alone. Windows will be open when practical
- 5) Day crews will have no more than 3 people in a van at a time. Camping crews may have up to 6 people
- 6) Minimize sharing tools to the extent possible
- 7) All **common** tools, equipment, and vehicles must be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning and end of each day *and* prior to transfer from one person to another
 - a. Tools that are difficult to sanitize (rope or fabric objects, etc), should be restricted to personal use and not shared, and/or, if these tools must be shared, they must be used while wearing gloves and masks in order to minimize risk

- 8) Tents will be vented and aired out as frequently as possible
- 9) Maintain physical distancing: Keep 6' between people to the extent possible. If working within 6' of each other, masks must be worn
- 10) Do not gather in groups exceeding 25 people including employees, agency partners, volunteers, and visitors
- 11) Bring a packed lunch to the field, and maintain social distancing while on lunch
- 12) All possible efforts should be made with the Project Partner for project site(s) to be closed to public, in order to protect the crew and public as much as possible. Use signage to facilitate this. Crews should proactively keep distance and wear masks if isolating procedures are not possible by members of the public
- 13) Crews will be instructed to the importance of effective individual and group hygiene, particularly around thorough handwashing and avoidance of touching their own face
 - a. Daily health and hygiene checks will take place amongst crew leaders
 - b. Handwashing stations will be present at camp, project site, etc.
 - c. Hand washing will occur frequently, especially after using bathroom/latrine, before preparation of food, or meals, before bed, and after rising in the morning
 - d. Crew Leaders will ensure that alcohol-based hand sanitizer is also available; hands must be rubbed thoroughly until dry
 - e. All communal surfaces will be disinfected daily and in the kitchen after each meal (tables, dishes, pots/pans, etc.) using CDC-recommended solution of $\frac{1}{3}$ cup bleach per one gallon of water and air dry
 - f. Crews will develop field laundry options to reduce or eliminate the need to visit laundromats (DIY agitator buckets, line dry)
 - g. Programs will facilitate more frequent bathing, which may include natural water sources
 - h. Programs will consider requiring extra work clothing (shirts/pants) for each member
 - i. Usual group activities should eliminate person to person contact
 - j. Face masks will be worn by anyone exhibiting signs of respiratory symptoms, and for all crew members if transporting an individual for medical evaluation
- 14) Special consideration will be given to food prep, storage, and communal meals:
 - a. Hand washing will be carried out prior to entering kitchen area; alcohol-based hand sanitizer will also be available
 - b. Surfaces will be disinfected prior to preparation or handling of food products or dishes/utensils with bleach solution of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup bleach to one gallon water
 - c. Food will be prepared by select members each day, who shall wear masks; those not involved will not enter kitchen area
 - d. Maximum two cooks at a time

- e. Consideration will be made toward where the crew is purchasing food: large vs. small stores, area, etc.

F) Face Masks

- 1) All employees must carry a mask with them at all times. Masks must be at least 2 layers or a surgical mask. Neck gaiters, bandanas and the like are not sufficient
- 2) Masks can be issued through the Logistics Manager. Contact them if needed
- 3) Wear a face mask:
 - o When 6' or less from others
 - o While interacting with agency partners, the public, or others, and ask agency partners to do the same
 - o When making essential stops at any public facilities or stores (bathrooms, gas stations, purchasing/picking up field supplies or project materials, etc.)
- 4) Wash face mask frequently and dry thoroughly between daily uses

II. COVID-19 Response Plan

A) Responding to COVID19 Symptoms

The CDC and state have made it clear that if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID19, including a fever of 100.4 or higher, you should contact your primary care physician or a medical professional. VYCC asks that any staff experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID19 to:

- 1) Self-isolate. If in the field, member/leader will isolate in their tent or well away from others
- 2) Contact their doctor, and follow their recommendations. If you need help accessing a medical professional, please contact the Administration Manager
- 3) Communicate with your VYCC Supervisor as soon as possible so we can respond quickly and follow through with any other safety protocols for the rest of staff that might be appropriate
- 4) Complete an incident report and file it with the Administration Manger ASAP
- 5) Return to work only on your doctor's recommendations and after being approved to return by your supervisor
- 6) All leaders and members should be on high alert for symptoms and check themselves and others regularly for symptoms

Every situation will be unique, so getting medical professional advice will be imperative. For further information on isolation and quarantine, see CDC's recommendations [here](#)

B) Responding to a Positive COVID19 or Presumptive Positive Case (test is administered)

- 1) Individual will **immediately** self-isolate at home, or in their tent if in the field, and follow the home-isolation plan outlined in “*section II-C*”.
 - a. Leaders start process to evacuate the individual to their self-quarantine site.
 - b. Contact VYCC supervisor immediately
 - VYCC supervisor will work with team to determine level of emergency response consistent with VYCC RASM Plan
 - Support Crew Leaders. Provide guidance on creating the safest possible scenario for all members, and emotional and moral support
 - c. Leaders will contact member emergency contacts to start process of evacuation
 - If they traveled in their own vehicle and they are physically well enough to drive, coordinate its retrieval from HQ and get it to them as fast as is reasonably possible
 - Deliver vehicle with full tank of gas, snacks, and water to minimize potential stops along the way
 - If they relied on a family member or if they are not well enough to drive, contact that person and start the process for them to be picked up
 - Members and leaders should take personal items with them and leave VYCC property as secured as possible
 - Camp should be left alone as long as is practical before staff arrive to breakdown, sanitize and load out camp
 - Durable surfaces should be sprayed with disinfectant and let dry while on site
- 2) Communicate status to their direct supervisor at VYCC. Supervisors will pass this information along to their supervising officer/director and to the Executive Director (ED)
- 3) The ED will be responsible for enacting the following response steps, as well as appropriate communication plans to address possible media outreach (See “Communication Plan” in Risk Management Program Document);
 - a. Inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for [how to conduct a risk assessment](#) of their potential exposure. Any employee who was potentially exposed should quarantine at home for 14 days before returning to work or until a negative test is received for a presumptive case
 - b. Potential closure of WMB facilities for a minimum of 4 days to undergo disinfecting following procedures outlined in “*Section II C*”, based on contact between staff who have been in both the field and HQ
 - c. After disinfecting process has been completed, Officers and the Executive Director will determine when it is safe for employees to return to work and notices will be sent via work email

4) File Incident Report with Administration Manager

C) Home Isolation Plan for COVID19 Positive

- Non-residential staff will home-isolate at their off-site residence
- Residential staff will isolate in their self-quarantine site
- If the self-quarantine site is unavailable and the Corps Member is unable to find an alternative site, VYCC can offer a suitable location (hotel, Air BnB). The program director will help secure housing. Money has been earmarked for these accommodations and does not need further budget approval.
- Members will check-in with their supervisor daily to provide wellness updates
- Contact your supervisor **at any time** if you need support while in home isolation

D) Cleaning and disinfecting procedures if an employee tests positive for COVID19

- Close off areas used by the ill persons and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- Thorough disinfecting of shared spaces in the West Monitor Barn performed and should follow [CDC guidelines for Cleaning and disinfecting](#)
- Any Vehicles or outside equipment used by the ill person should be isolated for the duration of the facilities closure. Once facilities are re-opened, these items can be disinfected by VYCC staff following [CDC Guidelines for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)

E) If someone within 1-degree of separation tests positive or has a presumptive case of COVID19

- The individual who has had contact will be asked to isolate at home for at least 14 days or until notified they may return to work by Officers and Executive Director

Important terms:

Physical Distancing: The CDC defines social distancing as "**remaining out of congregate settings**, avoiding gatherings of 25 + people and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others when possible."

Quarantine: VYCC will enforce separating and restricting "the movement of people who have been potentially exposed to Covid-19", limiting employees and tenants to campus for 14 days. Quarantine goes into effect if anyone on campus tests positive for COVID19. If someone within 1-degree of separation of a resident or staff member tests positive for COVID19, that individual must quarantine.

Isolation: For confirmed or suspected (doctor recommendation) Covid-19 cases. Home isolation goes into effect. Home Isolation includes a private room and bathroom for sick individual.

1-degree of separation: Is a measure of social distancing. Anyone you come in close association with on a daily or near daily basis. For example, anyone you work with, live with or a close friend or family member you see often.