

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

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

Principles Guiding our Programmatic Response

- 1) **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.
- 2) **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?
- 3) **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

A) Beginning Service

- 1) **For Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated Residential Participants**
 - a) Participants will engage in low-risk practices for 10-14 days prior to arrival, including:
 - I. Maintaining as strict a cohort as possible outside of your household outside of mandatory school, work requirements or activities required for the care of children
 - II. Wear masks around anyone who is not part of your household
 - III. Conduct meetings with anyone outside your household outdoors
 - IV. Do not attend social gatherings or events
 - b) Upon arrival to the program present a negative PCR COVID19 test received within 72 hours of arrival
 - c) Participants must confirm that they have a reliable site, within the state of Vermont, at which to self-quarantine and reliable transportation to that site, either by their own means or that of their emergency contact. This location and emergency contact will be documented and logged with medical forms

- 2) **For Residential, Fully Vaccinated Individuals (at least 2 weeks past final dose)**
 - a) Present evidence of vaccination upon arrival to program
 - b) Participants must confirm that they have a reliable site at which to self-quarantine (does not need to be in Vermont) and reliable transportation to that site, either by their own means or that of their emergency contact. This location and emergency contact will be documented and logged with medical forms
- 3) **For Non-Residential Participants**

Non-residential participants are not required to quarantine or test unless they are coming from out of state. If coming from out of state, follow guidance in section I.-F

B) General Prevention

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:

- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- If unvaccinated, gather socially only with one other unvaccinated household at a time. Exceptions will be made for:
 - Vaccinated individuals or households may gather socially with other vaccinated individuals or households
- Monitor yourself for symptoms before coming to work
- All staff returning to work are required to complete a VOSHA health training and send completion certificate to Admin Manager.
- All staff and members must have a facemask accessible at all times. Masks are required while in the presence of those from outside your household and should cover your mouth and nose.

- 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.
 - Before and after any stops to public facilities or stores (bathrooms, gas stations)

C) Health Screenings and Temperature Check

- 1) All VYCC participants will complete a self-assessment, including temperature check, and complete the Health Screening Form on a daily basis
- 2) 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 with 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
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Have you been near anyone diagnosed with COVID19 in the last two weeks?
 - Have you traveled out of state in the last two weeks? If so, have you completed quarantine and/or testing?
- 3) Health screenings should be completed out of sight and ear shot of others to maintain confidentiality
- 4) Employees experiencing symptoms should isolate immediately and follow procedure listed in II- B

D) 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 who is not of the same household must wear masks while inside a vehicle unless driving alone. Windows will be open when practical
- 5) Vehicles will not be occupied at more than half capacity, unless occupants are of the same household

- 6) Tents will be vented and aired out as frequently as possible
- 7) Maintain physical distancing: Keep 6' between people of other households to the extent possible. If working within 6' of members of other households, masks must be worn
- 8) Do not gather in groups exceeding 25 people including employees, agency partners, volunteers, and visitors
- 9) Bring a packed lunch to the field, and maintain social distancing from people who are not members of the same household while on lunch
- 10) 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
- 11) Crews will be instructed on the importance of effective individual and group hygiene, particularly around thorough handwashing and avoidance of touching their own face
 - a. Leaders should check in with themselves and each other about their general health
 - 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 to limit potential viral exposure
 - 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 bleach solution
 - f. Crews will develop field laundry options to reduce or eliminate the need to visit laundromats (DIY agitator buckets, line dry)
 - g. Usual group activities should eliminate person to person contact with people of different households

 - h. Hand washing will be carried out prior to entering kitchen area; alcohol-based hand sanitizer will also be available

- i. Surfaces will be disinfected prior to preparation or handling of food products or dishes/utensils with bleach solution of ¼ cup bleach to one gallon water
- j. Food will be prepared by select members each day, who shall wear masks; those not involved will not enter kitchen area
- k. Maximum two cooks at a time
- l. Consideration will be made toward where the crew is purchasing food and accessing services: large vs. small stores, area, etc.

E) Face Masks

- 1) Vermont currently mandates that masks be worn while near people from outside your household. All employees and volunteers 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 Coordinator. Contact them if needed
- 3) Wear a face mask:
 - o When 6' or less from those not of your household
 - 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

F) Interstate Travel

- 1) **Currently, any interstate travel will be followed by a minimum 10-day period of low risk practices as outlined in section A.1.a, unless you have been fully vaccinated and have provided proof of vaccination. If any un-vaccinated staff or member travels out of state, they must follow any travel restrictions and quarantine requirements for the states they plan to visit.**
- 2) Interstate travel is strongly discouraged by the state of Vermont except travel for essential purposes, including:
 - a) travel for personal safety
 - b) medical care
 - c) care of others
 - d) parental shared custody
 - e) for food, beverage or medicine
 - f) to attend preK-12 school if commuting daily
 - g) to perform work for businesses that are currently allowed to operate
- 3) Speak with your supervisor before planning out of state trips
- 4) Register with SARA alert upon start of quarantine.:
<https://apps.health.vermont.gov/EpiInfoWebSurvey/Home/9c2e5941-1ba7-4ab4-84be-558ba7684f5d>

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:

Non-Residential

- 1) Self-isolate at home
- 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) File an Incident Report with the Administration Manager
- 5) Return to work only on your doctor's recommendations and after being approved to return by your supervisor

Residential

- 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 if someone is symptomatic and being tested for COVID19

- 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
 - The supervisor immediately notifies Executive Director. 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 vehicle 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);
 - 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
 - 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
 - File Incident Report with Administration Manager

C) If you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 then:

- 1) If you have had contact with any individual within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more that has had a positive Covid-19 test then you are a close contact.
- 2) The individual who has had contact will quarantine a minimum of 7 days followed by a negative PCR test on day 7, for 14 days without exhibiting COVID 19 symptoms, or until notified they may return to work by Officers and Executive Director.. Quarantine location will be based on individual's place of residence. Plan outlined in "Section II. E"
- 3) File an Incident Report with the Administration Manager

D) If someone within 1 degree of separation has COVID19 symptoms and has been asked to take a test

- 1) Employees who have someone within their household or someone who has been characterized as being within one degree of separation; has COVID19 symptoms or is, quarantining in preparation for Covid-19 testing; or is in the wait period for a COVID19 test are not required by the Health Department or the ACCD to isolate, however VYCC strongly encourages any employee who is experiencing this to work remotely if possible to mitigate risk.

E) Home Isolation Plan for COVID19 Positive

- 1) Non-residential staff will home-isolate at their off-site residence
- 2) Residential staff will isolate in their self-quarantine site
- 3) 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.
- 4) Members will check-in with their supervisor daily to provide wellness updates
- 5) Contact your supervisor **at any time** if you need support while in home isolation

E) Safety and Comfort of All Employees

All staff need to feel safe and comfortable when they are at work. Practice good communication with others if they or someone else is making you or anyone else feel unsafe or uncomfortable regarding COVID-19 safety precautions. For example: if someone is standing too closely to you, try communicating with them first that you feel unsafe, they may

just not realize their actions are affecting you. If this is not an option for you, please seek out a Safety Officer via email or Teams and we can help navigate the situation. If you notice anything or anyone acting in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe always tell your Supervisor or the Administration Manager

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.

Full or Complete Vaccination: One is considered completely vaccinated at 14 days after their final dose of vaccine.

Resources:

If you are sick: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

How to prevent spreading COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>

Sector Specific Guidance: <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/business/stay-home-stay-safe-sector-specific-guidance>