

ROBERT MORRIS UNVIERSITY

SCHOOL OF NURSING, EDUCATION AND HUMAN STUDIES

Health & Safety Plan for Clinical Education

2021-2022

The School of Nursing, Education and Human Studies (SNEHS) at Robert Morris University remains fully committed to providing safe, healthy and supportive learning environments for all students. During the pandemic, SNEHS implemented additional measures to maintain and health and well-being of our students enrolled in programs requiring clinical education. The resulting *Health & Safety Plan for Clinical Education* has also been provided to our affiliating agencies in order to comply with clinical education requirements.

The overall purpose of the *Health & Safety Plan for Clinical Education* is to outline processes and procedures intended to minimize risk of exposure to infectious diseases, promote the health and well-being of students, and support academic progression and successful completion of clinical programs without delays due to illness.

University-level Information

All students at RMU are required to adhere to the university-level guidelines and procedures related to health and safety. Specific to COVID-19, the [RMU Ready Plan](#) outlines strategies and interventions for maintaining the health and safety of the entire RMU community. Strategies include monitoring the health conditions of the campus community, implementing protocols to contain the spread of COVID-19 and other illness, and communicating accurate and timely information with all stakeholders.

Program-level Information

Students in programs with clinical education requirements must continue to adhere to all existing, revised and newly developed program policies and procedures. Program-level policies are located on the [SNEHS](#) website and/or contained within the [Student Handbooks](#).

Specific to COVID-19, program policies and procedures are subject to change as new information is received from clinical facilities, local or state government agencies, and/or other regulatory bodies. Students will be notified of policy and procedure changes in a timely manner as they evolve. Students must remain attentive to changes and/or additions to program-specific policies and procedures related to COVID-19 or any similar outbreak.

For program-related questions and concerns, students are advised to contact their respective program director or program coordinator.

Clinical Education & Risk of Exposure

As part of the clinical education requirements for each program, students are assigned to a variety of clinical sites and healthcare settings. The patient care environment includes potential risk for exposure to patients who may have infectious illnesses, such as tuberculosis, influenza, HIV, hepatitis, and most recently, COVID-19.

This Health & Safety Plan addresses evidence-based protocols and practices that must be followed in order to mitigate the risk of potential exposure, and protect the health and safety of students, patients, staff and instructors.

If a student has concerns about enrolling in a clinical course or being in a clinical setting, the student should discuss those concerns immediately with the program director or program coordinator. If a student chooses to delay or suspend participation in a clinical or practicum experience, this will likely delay academic progression and program completion. Decisions of this nature should be discussed with the appropriate program director or program coordinator.

Clinical Clearances

PRIOR to entering a clinical site, students must comply with all mandatory background clearances, medical clearances, vaccines and immunization requirements, educational requirements and any additional COVID-19 compliance documentation or attestation. Compliance with the clinical clearance process is the university's legal obligation under the auspices of the clinical affiliation agreements.

Students who are *not* in compliance with all established clearances and mandatory educational requirements will not be permitted to participate in clinical education. This may result in delayed course completion and program progression.

COVID-19 Vaccine

Effective Fall 2021, the COVID-19 is required for students enrolled in face-to-face classes; this includes students enrolled in face-to-face clinical experiences. For more information related to university requirements, click [RMU COVID-19 Information](#).

Clinical agencies reserve the right to require the COVID-19 vaccine for employees, as well as students and visitors. Students will be made aware of all agency requirements where the COVID-19 vaccine is concerned.

Students may be required to disclose their vaccination status as part of the clinical clearance process. Proof of vaccinated status is also required by the University. Many agencies are tracking the presence of non-vaccinated individuals within their sites. In the event there is a significant increase of COVID-19 cases at a particular clinical agency, the information will be communicated to students in a timely manner.

If permitted, students are expected to provide care to any patient regardless of medical diagnosis. Many clinical agencies permit students to care for patients with COVID-19 symptoms, positive COVID-19 diagnosis, and/or patients under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19. Students who refuse a patient assignment may fail to meet course objectives and will receive an unsatisfactory grade in the course.

Evidence-based Practices and Protocols

Current evidence supports the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine in reducing the incidence and transmission of the virus, as well as the severity of the illness. In addition to the vaccine, the following evidence-based practices should continue to be implemented in the clinical setting. *Students are reminded to also **adhere to all agency-specific practices and protocols** related to infection control and patient safety.*

Face Coverings and PPE

- Clinical agencies reserve the right to require specific face coverings, including face masks and face shields, as well as other personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Students are required to wear agency-approved face coverings and other PPE.
- Students are not permitted to alter any agency-issued PPE.
- Students must adhere to agency guidelines regarding proper cleaning of face coverings.
- Students are required to wear face coverings at all times while in the clinical setting. In addition to all patient care areas, face coverings must be worn in breakrooms, locker rooms, and other public/common areas.

Hand Hygiene

- As part of the response to the emergence of COVID-19, all students must perform hand hygiene at regular intervals and according to clinical agency guidelines.
- Hand hygiene includes handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitizer (ABHS).
- Additional guidance for hand hygiene in healthcare settings can be found on the [CDC](#) site.

Physical Distancing

- Clinical education sites and practice settings reserve the right to limit the number of healthcare workers in patient rooms, exam rooms, procedure rooms, and other areas. Students must adhere to the physical distancing policy within the healthcare organization.
- Students should avoid gathering in large groups in public areas.

Self-Monitoring and Screening Protocols

All students should self-monitor for signs and symptoms of any illness, in particular, [COVID-19 symptoms](#). Students experiencing any signs or symptoms of illness should notify their instructor and stay home. Students should NOT attend clinical when ill. If the symptoms arise during clinical, the student should notify the instructor and leave the clinical site.

Students with symptoms of COVID-19 should call UPMC MyHealth@School Center at 412-397-6220 for phone screening and triage. The student should NOT visit the clinic. Students may not return to clinical until cleared to do so. The RMU Office of Student Life will notify instructors when students are cleared to return.

As required by the clinical agency, and in compliance with confidentiality laws, a program-level administrator or clinical coordinator may need to contact a clinical site or specific unit to report a student's COVID-19 diagnosis or reported illness. Additional university personnel will only be notified as necessary to promote the health and safety of the campus community.

Students who encounter challenges or concerns with the *Health & Safety Plan for Clinical Education*, or within the clinical setting, should contact their clinical instructor and/or program administrator immediately.