

**ROBERT MORRIS UNVIERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF NURSING, EDUCATION AND HUMAN STUDIES**  
**COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan for Clinical Education**

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. We know that healthy students are essential to the future of healthcare; therefore, additional information is being provide to those students enrolled in programs requiring clinical education. The purpose of the procedures contained in this safety plan are intended to: Minimize risk of exposure to infectious diseases, promote health and safety, and support academic progression in programs.

**University-level Information**

All students at RMU are required to adhere to the university-level guidelines and procedures outlined in the [RMU Ready Plan](#). The Ready Plan outlines strategies for maintaining the health and safety of the entire RMU community, including monitoring the health conditions of the campus community, implementing protocols to contain the spread of COVID-19\*, and communicating accurate and timely information with all stakeholders.

\*The internal RMU COVID-19 Response Protocol is activated in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 infection of any student, employee, or other individual who has had contact with our campus community.

All students are expected to comply with the [RMU Code during COVID-19](#). The Code outlines additional behavioral norms and expectations for students designed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the RMU community. Compliance with the code is essential to the health and safety of all members of the campus community.

**Program-level Information**

Students in programs with clinical education requirements must continue to adhere to all existing, 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.

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 recently, COVID-19.

This 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 may delay or prevent academic progression depending on the course objectives and requirements. 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.

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

## **Evidence-based Practices and Protocols**

Current evidence supports the effectiveness of implementing specific practices to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Practices include wearing face coverings, hand hygiene and physical distancing. Additional information related to these practices is provided below. 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.

- In the event the clinical agency cannot provide adequate PPE, and if adequate supplies of approved PPE are available, the School of Nursing, Education and Human Studies will provide PPE for students.

### **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**

- Students must adhere to the physical distancing policy within the healthcare organization.
- 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 can be within 6 feet of others while performing patient exams, providing patient care, participating in procedures as assigned by the clinical instructor or preceptor. In these instances, guidelines for face coverings, PPE, and hand hygiene should be observed at all times.
- Students are not permitted to gather in groups in public areas, including breakrooms or cafeterias.

### **Self-Monitoring, Screening and COVID-19 Protocols**

All RMU students should self-monitor for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) every day. For students in the clinical setting, self-monitoring for symptoms must be performed diligently and frequently throughout the day.

Students should be aware of screening procedures in effect at the various clinical sites. Depending on the time of day, and the nature of the screening procedure, this may delay entry into a facility. Students should plan accordingly and communicate any delays with the appropriate clinical instructor or preceptor.

Students are required to pass all agency-specific screenings in order to enter facilities and participate in clinical education. **In the event a student does not pass the screening procedure at a clinical facility, the student will not be permitted to enter the building.** Students in this situation must follow all university, program-level and clinical agency procedures and guidelines.

In addition, **clinical agencies will not permit students to enter a clinical site if they exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or have experienced an unprotected direct close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or longer) 48 hours before symptom onset to a person who is COVID positive or who is later identified as COVID positive.**

In these instances, students must notify the appropriate course instructor and program administrator, and refrain from attending the clinical site until *fully cleared*. Students should also seek guidance from a healthcare provider or MyHealth@school Center.

In order to be *fully cleared* to return to the clinical site, the student is required to:

- Adhere to isolation or quarantine guidelines set forth in the RMU Ready Plan and by the Clinical Agency
- Obtain medical documentation indicating the student is cleared to return to the clinical site without restrictions.
- Submit medical documentation to the program director/coordinator for review. Once approved, the student will be notified to resume clinical education at the site.

As required by the clinical agency and the university, and in compliance with confidentiality laws, a program-level administrator from RMU will contact the clinical site/department/unit where the student was assigned to report all necessary information related to COVID-19 exposure.

Additional university personnel will be notified as necessary to promote the health and safety of the campus community.

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