



# Communicable Diseases Policy

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**Responsible Office:** Administration and Governance

Policy Categories: 1.0 – Academic Programs; 2.0 – Operations; 3.0 – Administration and Governance; 4.0 Students and Student Affairs; 5.0 – Both Campuses; 6.0 – Committees and Councils; 7.0 – Archived Policies; 8.0 – Forms

## **Policy Statement:**

This Policy sets forth the principles Rocky Vista University (hereafter referred to as RVU), will follow to protect students, faculty and staff, whenever possible, from exposure to certain communicable illnesses. In appropriate situations, aspects of this policy will apply university-wide. Clinical guidance relevant to specific communicable illnesses, will be arranged by health officials, including those designated by RVU's President and CEO. This policy serves as guidance only and may change as needs, facts and guidance changes in relation to specific communicable diseases.

It is the policy of RVU to review, evaluate, and respond on an individual case-by-case basis, when possible, to any known suspected or confirmed instances of certain communicable illnesses among members of the RVU community which may be transmitted in a normal business or academic setting. Such individual review, evaluation, and response should take into consideration applicable federal and state laws; the recommendations of the U.S. Public Health Service, the Centers for Disease Control, Local and State Health Departments, the American Osteopathic Association, and various professional associations; other relevant medical, scientific, and legal literature; the expressed desires and opinions of the individual with such illness and the individual's personal physician; and the university's commitment to the protection, to the extent possible, of both public health and individual rights.

RVU recognizes that employees and students with any suspected or confirmed communicable illness may wish to continue their employment or enrollment. As long as they are able to meet acceptable performance standards, comply otherwise with all other required health regulations which describe mandatory screenings and vaccinations, and the medical evidence indicates that their conditions are not a threat to themselves or others, it is the policy of RVU that these employees and students be treated consistently with other employees and students in these matters. All members of the RVU community will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, when possible, to determine what if any restrictions apply, given the type of illness, the individual's health status, and the nature of the work or educational setting, among other relevant factors.

In the situation of an epidemic or pandemic of local, national, or international concern, RVU reserves the right to determine fitness for duty and safety of any employee or student. In situations where case-by-case evaluation is not possible, broad restrictions may be implemented.

RVU will address issues involving communicable illnesses in a sensitive and responsible manner, with concern for the rights and welfare of faculty, staff and students.



1. **Communicable Disease and Screenings.** Any member of the RVU community who has been exposed to a communicable disease that may be transmitted to the university community or in patient care settings or who is symptomatic for a communicable disease should seek medical evaluation and must inform the university as stated below.

**Employees** are to contact their direct supervisor, who will consult with the Office of Human Resources if necessary. Additionally, employees must complete the appropriate attestation form, and await the direction of a medical officer, if applicable. If a work-related exposure to communicable disease is alleged, the employee should contact HR, as the employee may be sent to a Worker's Compensation Provider.

**Pre-clinical and masters students** are to complete the appropriate attestation form and await direction from a medical officer. If unable to attend class or take an exam, students are required to complete the excused absence form and notify the appropriate person in their respective program.

**Students on clinical externships / rotation** are to complete the appropriate attestation form, followed by contacting their Rotation Coordinator in Clinical Education, who will in turn contact and consult with the Associate Dean of Clinical Education and/or the PA Program Director.

Note: The ADA defines some forms of communicable disease as a disability. A "direct threat" is a significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the individual or others that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation for essential job function. If an individual with a disability poses a direct threat despite reasonable accommodation, he or she is not protected by the nondiscrimination provisions of the ADA.

2. **During certain communicable disease outbreaks,** it may be necessary to close RVU's operations for a specified period of time as determined by the President. All members of the RVU community may be asked to undergo health screening and/or health status reporting. Such provisions will be activated upon emergency order from the President or the President's designee based on available local or state health department and federal recommendations.

Under such emergency provisions, RVU may require individuals who travel to and from areas with active communicable disease outbreaks to report all such travel to university leadership and to undergo testing and other screening requirements considered medically appropriate prior to returning to work, classes, or rotation sites. If considered necessary, RVU may impose self-quarantine for individual cases. RVU reserves the right to suspend or cancel some or all RVU sponsored travel.

3. **Medical Care.** Individuals with suspected or confirmed communicable illnesses are encouraged to seek immediate guidance and/or medical care. Faculty, staff and students should look primarily to their personal physician for appropriate guidance and medical care or urgent care or ED setting as warranted. If exposure to a communicable disease is known to be work-related, contact should be made with the HR department for directions under Worker's Compensation. Any RVU employee or student with a suspected or confirmed communicable illness experiencing difficulty in obtaining expert medical care and/or counseling is encouraged to seek assistance from university leadership or their local or state health departments.
4. **Confidentiality.** RVU recognizes the importance of protecting, to the greatest extent possible, the confidentiality and privacy interests of all employees and students suspected of having or are confirmed to have a communicable disease. RVU complies with all HIPAA, FERPA, and other regulatory authorities.



5. **Fitness for Duty.** An appropriate licensed medical provider will be solely responsible for assessing an employee or student's relevant clinical information to determine fitness for attendance or duty and/or identify relevant work restrictions or recommend special accommodations. The results of this assessment of fitness for duty will be shared confidentially with Human Resources or the Provost when needed to manage employment related issues or student attendance and participation in educational activities.
6. **Reporting Requirement for Certain Communicable Diseases.** Faculty, students, or staff members who know they have a communicable disease of national concern or who have a reasonable basis for believing that they have such a communicable disease must report this to the university. **They further have the obligation to** conduct themselves responsibly for their own protection and the protection of other members of the university and local community. Faculty, students, or staff members with a communicable disease must not knowingly engage in any activity that creates a material risk of transmission to others. Decisions regarding restrictions on or modifications of employment and academic duties/activities and access to facilities or programs as a result of a communicable illness will be made on a case-by-case basis, when possible, depending on the type and nature of the communicable disease, the nature of the work or educational setting, and the risk to the health of the individual or others.
7. **Quarantine or other required period of absence from work or student attendance.** Where medically required, and/or recommended by the CDC, local or state health departments, employees and students will be expected to comply with quarantine or other such restrictions as prescribed by the university or by a public health official.

Where quarantine is imposed due to an **employee's exposure** while performing work directed by RVU, the employee will be paid regular pay and will not have sick or vacation balances reduced during the period of quarantine. FMLA and /or Worker's compensation may possibly apply during the period of quarantine.

Where quarantine is imposed due to a **student's exposure** while attending classes, clinical externships, or participating in RVU educational activities, the student will be excused from classes, clinical externships, and educational activities and allowed to make up missed assignments and required curriculum.

8. In the case of a vaccine-preventable communicable disease outbreak, employees or students who are not vaccinated and who risk possible exposure to the vaccine-preventable communicable disease in the course of their duties or attendance may be sent home until the risk of possible exposure is mitigated. In these cases, the employee will likely be required to use their vacation or sick time, and the student will need to make arrangements to make up assignments. An exception for those who declared an exemption from vaccinations by reason of a disability-related issue or immunodeficiency or religious beliefs should be discussed with personal physicians and communicated to university leadership.

**Special Note:** *Every communicable disease outbreak is unique. RVU is aware that all possibilities and scenarios cannot be contained in one policy document. It is therefore expected that everyone reads, understands, and adheres to all university communications regularly to assure rapid and accurate compliance to all guidelines and protocols.*

**Additional Resources.** The following state offices and federal agencies are available to provide information and respond to questions about communicable illnesses.

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe>

[www.health.utah.gov](http://www.health.utah.gov)