

## Communicable Diseases Policy

### I. Introduction

A. *Purpose.* The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the effective and appropriate management of issues relating to communicable diseases affecting members of the campus community at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (“UAHuntsville” or the “University”).

B. *Scope of Policy.* A communicable disease is any disease that can be transmitted from one individual directly to another individual. Some communicable diseases can be spread by casual contact. For example, colds, flu, and tuberculosis can be spread from respiratory droplets that may be transmitted through coughing, sneezing, or a runny nose. Some communicable diseases require contact with an infected individual’s blood, body fluids, or genitalia, such as Hepatitis B, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (the virus that causes AIDS), chlamydia, genital herpes, and syphilis. This policy is concerned only with those communicable diseases that pose a significant threat to the life or health of others, and all references to “communicable diseases” herein are to be understood as having that more restricted meaning.

C. *Applicability.* This policy applies to all University students, faculty, and staff employees and all on-site contract workers.

### II. General Policy.

A. *Basis for University Actions.* Actions taken by the University regarding individuals with communicable diseases will comply with applicable laws and this policy, will be guided by medical advice that is current and well-informed, and will seek to protect the rights and well-being of both the University community at large and individuals within that community.

B. *Other University Policies.* This policy will be interpreted and implemented in a manner that is consistent with applicable University student and employment policies regarding illness and disability.

C. *Educational Programs.* The University will develop and maintain an educational program to provide students, faculty, and staff employees information about communicable diseases to which they may be at risk. The programs will endeavor to utilize the most current medical and scientific information available, and they will address both contagion information and prevention measures.

D. *Testing and Medical Care Resources.* The University will identify and provide information to the campus community about sources of competent and confidential testing for communicable diseases, as well as for counseling. The University will further identify sources

of qualified medical care for communicable diseases and encourage those with such diseases to utilize such sources.

E. *Individualized Approach.* Decisions involving students or employees with communicable diseases will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the medical facts presented as well as the need to maintain confidentiality and to serve the best interests of all parties involved.

F. *Implementation Responsibility.* Responsibility for the implementation of this policy will rest with the Vice President for Diversity and Student Support Services.

### III. Specific Policies

A. *U.S. Public Health Service - Safety Guidelines.* The University will widely publicize and carefully observe safety guidelines (such as “universal precautions”) established by the U.S. Public Health Service for the handling of blood and other body fluids and secretions in all health care facilities maintained by the University and in other institutional contexts in which such fluids or secretions may be encountered (*e.g.*, teaching and laboratory facilities). All students, faculty, and staff employees must use appropriate barrier precautions to prevent skin and mucous-membrane contact with blood and other body fluids of any person.

B. *Prevention.* An effective measure to prevent the contracting of communicable diseases is to maintain appropriate immunizations and vaccinations. The University will encourage incoming students to have completed all recommended immunizations and to be aware of the availability of the meningococcal, hepatitis B, and influenza vaccines. Pursuant to recommendations of the American College Health Association, any student enrolling at the University must provide evidence of vaccination against measles prior to the first semester of attending classes. The University will further publicize and, where feasible, assist with the administration of other immunizations and vaccines for members of the campus community.

C. *Testing - International Students.* All new international students (foreign-born, non United States citizens who are not permanent residents) admitted and enrolled for on-campus coursework must be tested for tuberculosis before the first semester of attendance at the University. A student testing positive for tuberculosis will be required to submit to further tests, and, if a tuberculosis condition is confirmed by these tests, the student will be subject to the imposition of appropriate restrictions, as provided for in subparagraph III.H.2 below, to protect the health of other students.

D. *Confidentiality.* All medical information about an individual will be treated as private and confidential and will be handled in compliance with legal requirements and professional ethical standards.

1. The University will implement and maintain procedural safeguards to protect the privacy interests of persons in the campus community who have a communicable disease.

2. The University will not disclose the identity of any employee or student who has a communicable disease, except as authorized or required by law, as may be necessary, on a “need to know” basis, for the administration of this policy, and as is consistent with the guidelines included in the American College Health Association's Recommended Standards and Practices for a College Health Program (4th edition), which provides, in part, as follows: “In general, it is recommended that no specified or detailed information concerning complaints or diagnosis be provided to faculty, administrators, parents or relative, without the expressed written consent of the patient in each case.”

E. *Reporting Requirements.* The University will comply with legal requirements regarding the reporting of communicable diseases. See § 22-11A-1 *et seq.*, *Alabama Code* (1975, as amended) regarding the reporting of notifiable diseases and health conditions and Alabama Department of Public Health, Rule 420-4-1 Appendix I - Alabama Notifiable Diseases/Conditions.

F. *Notification.*

1. Any person who has reasonable evidence to believe that a member of the campus community (a student, faculty, and/or staff employee) has a communicable disease that could potentially pose a significant threat to the health of others will report that information to the Vice President for Diversity and Student Support Services or another member of the Communicable Diseases Management Team. This duty to report applies to the infected individual as well.

2. Upon receiving such a report, the Vice President for Student Affairs will transmit the information to the chair of the Communicable Diseases Management Team.

G. *Infected Individual - Responsible Action.* A UAHuntsville individual who knows, or has reason to believe, he or she has a communicable disease is expected to obtain expert medical advice about the known or suspected health condition and, if indicated, to obtain follow-up treatment. Such individual should also report this information and the plan of care to the Vice President for Diversity and Student Support Services, the Student Health Center, or to the Faculty/Staff Clinic. He/She is obligated, ethically and legally, to conduct himself/herself responsibly in light of such knowledge, so as to protect other members of the University community.

H. *Infected Individuals - Restrictions.*

1. A UAHuntsville employee who, based on a diagnosis, is known to have or, based on reasonable evidence, is suspected of having a communicable disease may be

excluded from the workplace and required to take sick leave (and/or other available leave) until a written statement from the employee's physician, as described in paragraph III.I below, is provided.

2. A UAHuntsville student who, based on a diagnosis, is known to have or, based on reasonable evidence, is suspected of having a communicable disease may be subjected to certain limitations until a written statement from the employee's physician, as described in paragraph III.I below, is provided. Such limitations may include excluding the student from campus or restricting the student from attending classes, obtaining meals in UAHuntsville dining facilities, living in campus residence facilities, etc.

3. Such limitations must be based on a reasonable medical diagnosis of a communicable disease and a medical judgment that the limitations are necessary for the health or welfare of the infected individual (*e.g.*, a student requires care that cannot reasonably be provided in the University housing setting) and/or the health or welfare of other members of the University community (*e.g.*, an employee is contagious or is demonstrating behaviors that are inappropriate in the workplace and cannot be reasonably accommodated).

I. *Return to Work or School.* Before limitations imposed on an individual employee or student who has been diagnosed as having a communicable disease can be removed, the individual must present a written statement from the attending physician indicating that the individual is no longer infectious and, as of a specified date, is able to return to work and carry out the essential functions of the job (in the case of an employee) or is able to return to and carry out normal academic and campus activities (in the case of a student).

#### IV. Communicable Diseases Management Team (CDMT)

A. *Reporting Line and Membership.* The CDMT will report to the President of the University. It will be composed of regular members, who will participate on an ongoing basis with respect to general committee activities and functions, and *ad hoc* members, who will be added to the committee as needed to assist with committee functions and activities in addressing a specific communicable disease case:

1. Regular members:
  - Vice President for Diversity and Student Support Services, Chair
  - A medical professional from the Student Health Center, appointed by the Vice President for Diversity and Student Support Services
  - A medical professional from the Faculty and Staff Clinic, appointed by the Vice President for Finance and Administration
  - Director of the Counseling Center

- A faculty member from the College of Nursing, appointed by the Dean
- An attorney from the UAHuntsville Office of Counsel, appointed by the University Counsel
- Director of University Relations
- Director of Public Safety
- Director, Environmental Health and Safety
- Administrator, Emergency Planning

2. *Ad hoc* members:

- Provost, or designee (if any faculty member could be affected)
- Associate Vice President for Human Resources, or designee (if any staff employee could be affected)
- Director of University Housing (if a student is involved and he/she lives on campus)
- Director of Athletics (if student athlete is involved)

B. *Chair.* The President will appoint the chair of the CDMT. The Chair will, together and in coordination with the Director of University Relations, serve as the University spokes-person to the public for all matters relating to the management of a campus situation involving a communicable disease.

C. *Duties.* The CDMT will have the following functions and responsibilities:

1. Receive information about individuals within the UAHuntsville community who have, or who are suspected of having, a communicable disease, or about a situation in which there is a significant risk of infection of members of the campus community.

2. If appropriate under the circumstances, investigate the potential source of the disease, so as to identify campus members who may have been or may be exposed.

3. Be informed about developments concerning the particular communicable disease and the medical, biological, legal, financial, and public relations facts and issues that are pertinent to the disease and the situation presented to the University.

4. Obtain the most current recommendations about the management and prevention of the spread of the disease and, if appropriate, request vaccines and/or medications. Request additional professional and clerical assistance, if deemed necessary.

5. Advise and make recommendations to the University, as appropriate, concerning educational programs and prevention measures relating to the communicable

disease that may be undertaken by the University for the benefit of the campus community. If deemed appropriate under the circumstances, provide education to the campus community about how to identify and report any signs and symptoms of the disease.

6. Advise and make recommendations to the University, as necessary and appropriate and where legally permitted, to protect the health of other members of the University community who may be at risk from the infected individual and to protect the legal rights of the known or suspected infected individual. This may include the identification of recommended restrictions to be imposed on the known or suspected infected individual and the removal of such restrictions.

7. Provide information and education about the disease, to the extent deemed necessary and consistent with confidentiality considerations, to co-workers, roommates, classmates, etc. of the infected individual.

8. Assure that a person who is known or suspected to have a communicable disease is encouraged to seek appropriate medical treatment and counseling.

9. Notify the Alabama Public Health Department about the disease, if it is listed in Alabama Department of Public Health, Rule 420-4-1 Appendix I - Alabama Notifiable Diseases/Conditions.

10. Advise and make recommendations to the University regarding the communication of information to the public and the media.

11. Coordinate with appropriate city, county, and state officials regarding screening for, reporting, and management of communicable diseases. With respect to a specific case, the committee may seek the latest recommendation about ways to manage and prevent the spread the communicable disease, may request appropriate vaccines and/or medications, and may request additional professional and clerical assistance, if deemed necessary.

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