

## **SEIU Local 32BJ's Guidance and Recommendations on Reopening Institutions of Higher Education**

As states look to reopen our economies, institutions of higher education must adopt practices to ensure the health and well-being of students and the broader community in the areas of cleaning, maintenance, security, and food services. Higher education is an especially challenging setting to maintain a safe environment given the mix of residential, office, meeting and classroom spaces, as well as the mix of younger and older people in a relatively confined space.

As the economy reopens generally and higher education in particular, the utilization of buildings is likely to change. There will be less density in most settings, no work flows, new screening procedures and social distancing protocols. There will be increased need for deep cleaning, disinfection, and increased cleaning of high-touch surfaces. Social distancing protocols will need to be enforced. Campus cleaners and maintenance workers, security guards and food service workers will be even more critical in the coming months to ensure that students, faculty and staff all remain safe.

If additional needs to shelter in place arise and students and staff return to remote learning and working, institutions of higher education should implement policies to ensure that their workers and subcontracted workers are retained on the job. Additionally, if a direct or subcontracted service employee becomes unable to work because the employee is quarantined (pursuant to federal, state, or local government order or advice of a healthcare provider), and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis, the university or college should provide two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid quarantine leave at the employee's regular rate of pay.

All institutions need to create a culture of vigilance in regards to safe practices. This will mean providing personal protective equipment and enforcing social distancing. It may mean requiring temperature checks and other necessary health screening of students and staff before entering the building in order to ensure the health and safety of all. All efforts should be taken to ensure that colleges and universities are supported in the procurement of the appropriate equipment. For institutions of higher education with affiliated hospitals, they must issue and implement policies to ensure safety of the teaching staff, students and workers who interact with the hospital and the general campus. And across the board, all universities and colleges need guidance, implementation and enforcement of policies to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect students, faculty and workers to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment.

Unions should be considered a valuable partner in addressing the changes now needed to combat the spread of COVID-19. Unions representing direct employees and subcontracted workers should be consulted in the development of these policies. Mandated or required participation by the Unions at the earliest stages will minimize any bargaining obligations that exist with any major changes in the way universities and colleges operate. Consultation early in the process with unions will ensure a smooth transition when institutions of higher education reopen.

Across the board, for the safety, health, and well-being of all students, faculty and staff, institutions of higher education should adhere to CDC guidelines on reopening, cleaning and disinfecting of community facilities; and social distancing protocols:

**Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

**Cleaning and Disinfecting for Community Facilities:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

**Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

**Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-ihe-response.html>

Because of Local 32BJ's experience representing cleaning, maintenance, security, and food service workers at institutions of higher education, we have developed best-practices that we urge institutions of higher education to adopt:

#### **All Campus Workers**

- Provide adequate personal protective equipment (non-N95 surgical masks and gloves) at no cost to the employee, as well as hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes
- Require "touch free" methods of clocking in and out
- Ensure adequate and frequent cleaning of non-public areas for breaks
- In an effort to avoid large gatherings, all steps should be taken to communicate to workers over text and email, and trainings should be virtual
- Frequent breaks for hand washing
- Staggered shifts where possible

#### **Campus Maintenance/Custodial Staff**

- Ensure workers are trained on CDC enhanced cleaning guidelines and trained on any new equipment needed for cleaning
- For staff working in dormitories: staff should also be trained on how to respond if a resident becomes ill
  - Provide staff with full hazmat suits if they need to go inside a living unit in a building where a student has tested positive for COVID-19
  - Require everyone to wear masks in living common areas, such as in dormitories
- Hire an adequate number of workers to maintain enhanced cleaning protocols and any new cleaning equipment
- Limit the use of campus facilities by third parties and require necessary cleaning and disinfection/sanitization after these events
- Limit number of faculty and students in common areas (hallways, dining halls, bathrooms, meetings rooms, conference rooms and kitchens) to comply with social distancing
- Stagger class periods and/or limit the number of students and staff allowed in the building at a given time

#### **Campus Security**

- Issue guidance on mandatory touchless temperature checks to be administered by security officers with training on the guidance
- Develop clear protocols for when guards must interact physically with students or the public inside and outside campus

- Where there are two guards assigned to a post, ensure proper social distancing between work areas
- Extend enhanced and existing training requirements for officers as needed during states of emergency
  - All accommodations should be made to make training available online
  - Training should be done on paid time
- Require protection at posts from public including the use of plexiglass shields (sometimes guards sit at desks/podiums in entryways of campus buildings)
- Use plexiglass shields when required to inspect backpacks/bags
- Clean and disinfect posts when guards are changed (at shift changes/breaks)
  - Provide guards with disinfectant wipes to do the cleaning when custodians are not available
- Provide guidelines for locations that use an intercom to admit the public
- Set-ups that ensure distancing from students and visitors (i.e. tape markers and arrows) entering campus and campus facilities

### **Campus Food Service**

- Ensure that staff receive necessary training to protect themselves and those they serve from spread of COVID-19
- Issue guidelines for kitchen workspace to ensure kitchen staff can follow social distancing
- Ensure distancing from workers and those being served (i.e. tape markers, arrows and plexiglass shields)
- Whenever possible minimize contact between students, staff, and food service workers by doing “grab-and-go” style lunch or by utilizing outside space
  - The appropriate cleaning protocols to accommodate such changes must be put into place
- For staff that need to deliver food to students that are COVID-19 positive, ensure contact-less delivery methods such as food drop off areas outside the residential building
- Require cleaning of high touch areas during peak meal times
- Stagger meal serving times for students and staff and stagger shifts for workers so dining halls are not overly crowded
- If hot food service continues, “hot stations” (worker serves the food to students) need plexiglass shields
  - When possible, workers should put food in “boats” ahead of time to convert to self-service
- For cashiers, move to moneyless transactions and require contractors to set-up electronic systems for payment
- Install plexiglass shields at checkout
- Require cleaning daily and between shift changes in locker room areas for staff
  - In buildings where there is no locker room available for staff, the university/college must make space available where workers can store and access their personal belongings individually (sometimes personal items are stored in the manager's office)