Parents are a very important part of the Messiah University community, and we understand that you have many questions related to your child’s college experience during the challenges and complexities of COVID-19. In response, Messiah has prepared this resource for you based on the most frequent questions we have received from parents at the start of our spring semester. For the most current information about Messiah’s response to COVID-19, all parents are encouraged to visit the Together @ Messiah website, subscribe to Messiah’s emergency blog, and join Messiah’s parent Facebook community.

1. **Why did Messiah test students during their first week back on campus when students had to submit a negative COVID-19 prior to campus arrival?**

   Although all residential and commuter students were required to provide a negative PCR test prior to campus arrival, it is still possible for students to have become positive for COVID-19 between the time of their at-home test and arrival on campus.

   Given the close communal living, study and work setting of our University, it is critical for Messiah to quickly re-establish a safe and protective campus environment, especially following an extended break when students are returning from across the U.S. and abroad. In a time when COVID-19 cases are spiking across the country, early population testing allows the University to contain any potential outbreak, and provides our best chance of success for staying open for face-to-face instruction for the semester. Testing all students within this timeframe also allows Messiah to comply with current directives and guidelines from the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Education.

2. **Why is Messiah asking residential students not to leave campus?**

   Residential undergraduate students should only leave campus when absolutely necessary. The more residents travel off campus, the greater the risk of being exposed to COVID-19 and introducing it to our campus community. *Note: Students may leave campus for medical care or off-campus jobs, internships, clinicals, practicums, etc., if their employers are following Messiah's mitigation protocols for COVID-19, including requiring masks and social distancing.

   We are also asking students to refrain from off-campus dining, grocery/supply runs, returning home for the weekends, visiting others off-campus, etc. Students who are in need of off-campus groceries and supplies are encouraged to take advantage of the numerous local stores who offer online ordering and contactless/curbside pickup. Several local delivery services, such as Grubhub and Uber Eats, also provide contactless campus delivery from numerous restaurants in the area. This will be
critical for us to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in our campus residences and classrooms.

**During the first two weeks of the spring semester:** During our first two weeks back on campus, it is particularly essential for undergraduate residential students to re-establish safe and health campus “family groups,” similar to the process we used this fall. Accordingly, off-campus travel must be restricted to essential travel only, i.e., work, internships, clinicals, student teaching, medical care, etc. While Messiah does have protocols in place for off-campus church attendance, we are asking students to refrain from worshipping off-campus for the first two weeks.

Students who do not follow these travel protocols could be referred to the student conduct process and/or be asked to quarantine. So we greatly appreciate family members’ support and cooperation in helping us to protect our campus community in this way.

3. **Am I able to visit my child or drop something off to them if I don’t go into any campus buildings?**

During the first two weeks of the spring semester, the University asks that parents and other off-campus guests do not come to campus. It is safest for Messiah’s campus community if only students and employees are physically on campus while they are re-establishing a safe and healthy campus environment following winter break. And until further notice, no off-campus visitors are permitted inside university residences, including commuters and student family members. However, if after the first two weeks of the semester, it is necessary for an off-campus family member to connect with their student, they may do so outside, i.e., they may not be inside of a campus building, and must wear a mask and socially distance at all times.

Family members are asked NOT to come to campus, however, if they exhibit any of the symptoms of COVID-19, are confirmed positive with COVID-19, or have been in close direct contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19.

4. **Can I pick up my child and take them off campus to run errands, take them out to eat, etc.?**

The University expects that this will not happen during the spring semester. It is much safer, if necessary, for family members to bring supplies, take-out meals, etc., to students versus taking them off-campus (following the above outdoor visitation parameters).

As part of the Community Promise they signed prior to the semester, residential students agreed not to leave and return to campus unless absolutely critical. This greatly reduces the risk of spreading COVID-19 to the campus community. We greatly appreciate family members’ support and cooperation in helping us to protect our campus community in this way.
5. **What if my child really needs to come home?**

The University expects students not to travel home, or to visit other off-campus households, during the entirety of the spring semester. We ask that residential students only leave campus for absolutely necessary travel. If it is necessary for a student to travel home, students are asked to mask and social distance during that time. We realize that this is not an intuitive concept since we are all used to thinking of our households as our “family group.” However, once on campus, students form a new “family group” with the residents on their floor/apartment. It is safest for Messiah’s campus community if students do not bring external exposure (even if it’s from their family household) back to their established campus family group.

Students will be asked about off-campus travel during their daily health check-in. It is important to know that students who do not follow Messiah’s travel and mitigation protocols may be subject to quarantine, so we greatly appreciate students’ and families’ cooperation in keeping our campus community safe.

6. **Are students permitted to travel during the spring long weekend in March and during Easter Break?**

Messiah has built a few days without classes into its spring semester as an important break for students from their studies and daily academic routine. However, it is critical that students not travel off campus during the March long weekend or over Easter Break in April. ([The University announced its revised spring 2021 calendar](https://example.com), including the elimination of spring break week and a shortened Easter break last semester.)

We recognize that students may feel the loss of the usual off-campus travel that they would typically experience during these times. In response, Messiah will be offering expanded on-campus programming and events designed to involve and support students during both of these long weekends.

7. **If the University determines that my child needs to self-quarantine or isolate, am I able to pick them up so they can do so at home?**

The safest public health protocol for a student who needs to self-quarantine or isolate (due to suspected or confirmed exposure to COVID-19) is to remain in campus housing so as not to risk spreading the virus further outside of the campus community. The University is prepared to care for and support students in this way. However, if the student and their parent/guardian prefer that the student self-quarantine or isolate from home, they are able to do so. This decision would just need to be facilitated and communicated through the University’s Engle Health Center.

Read additional FAQs regarding student experience in quarantine and isolation.

Watch our video about students’ support on entering quarantine experience.
8. **When is Messiah expected to have access to the COVID-19 vaccine for its students and employees?**

   Please read these additional FAQs regarding Messiah University and the COVID-19 vaccine.

9. **Is Messiah continuing on-campus testing for COVID-19 throughout the spring semester?**

   Yes, all students should anticipate a continuation of asymptomatic full population and regular population sampling testing through the spring. Student athletes have their own regular testing schedule, and additional asymptomatic testing may be necessary within specific student groups based on elevated COVID-19 cases within those populations. Messiah uses a combination of various COVID-19 testing methods—including PCR and antigen testing. The testing method depends on the specific circumstances, i.e., individual vs. group testing, symptomatic vs. asymptomatic testing, the individual health needs of the students and the timing involved.

   Messiah is additionally conducting ongoing, regular sampling testing of on-campus employees throughout the spring semester.

   Read the Engle Center’s full testing and other health and safety protocols.

10. **Where can I see the number of positive cases of COVID-19 on Messiah University’s campus during the spring semester?**

    You may follow the number of confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 on Messiah University’s campus on its [public online dashboard](#), which is updated each weekday by 5 p.m.