



COLORADO

Division of Private
Occupational Schools

Department of Higher Education

March 13, 2020

NOTICE & RESOURCES

As you know, COVID-19 (the coronavirus) is providing challenges across the globe. The Governor of Colorado, Jared Polis, has declared a state of emergency and some of our public higher education institutions have decided to discontinue classroom learning and have moved to distance education offerings. In preparing this Notice, the Division has conferred with The State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) who are monitoring the evolving situation pertaining to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and has also considered guidance/updates from federal agencies and national health authorities as we receive them. Please see the last section titled “**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**” for more guidance that has been issued to the higher education community.

WHAT ARE THE BOARD & DIVISION OF PRIVATE OCCUPATIONAL SCHOOLS DOING?:

The Board & Division of Private Occupational Schools held an Emergency Board meeting on March 12th, 2020 to discuss how to best ensure safety and health for all as we continue to serve the needs of our students in private occupational educational institutions. As the current situation warrants, the Board delegated to the Division the temporary authority to approve changes in delivery methodology from classroom to distance education on a case by case basis. This correspondence is intended to convey how we will review and consider continuity plans for institutions who wish to apply for temporary and expedited approval for new delivery methodologies in order to avoid or minimize disruption in educational services. Please know that the Division, under the Board’s delegation of authority, will extend as much flexibility as we can to the institution’s program and course approvals while we continue to ensure delivery of quality education.

NOTIFY THE DIVISION OF PRIVATE OCCUPATIONAL SCHOOLS (DPOS) OF CHANGES TO EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS DUE TO COVID-19.

If an institution needs to adjust its business operations in substantial ways (for example, reducing or suspending face-to-face class sessions), an institution must notify DPOS of the adjustment, including the steps it takes to ensure quality and continuity in its instructional activity. Please work directly with your assigned Program Specialist via email; and please provide all notifications you are sending to students related to educational offering alterations due to COVID-19.

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If you do not know who your Program Specialist is, please direct the information to all Program Specialists and Amy Knoblauch at Amy.Knoblauch@dhe.state.co.us.

TEMPORARY DISTANCE EDUCATION REQUEST WAIVER:

DPOS will temporarily, on a case by case basis, waive its distance education review requirements for institutions that indicate they are accommodating students whose enrollment is interrupted as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

If an institution determines that it has the need and capacity to offer some or all of its educational offerings in a distance education format that is *beyond the scope of your current approval as a delivery method*, DPOS has created an expedited, no-fee process so that institutions can request a temporary waiver of normal requirements for approving distance education. **Again, it is important that you obtain this approval of delivery method from the Division PRIOR to making that change in order to be compliant with Statute and Rules that govern Private Occupational Schools in Colorado.** This approval is vital in ensuring ongoing quality education to students and enables the Division to be aware of the change in the event that a student files a complaint against the school. If this is the direction your school is wanting to go, please request the waiver from your assigned Program Specialist. When filling out the approval form please be prepared to provide the following information:

- Proposed method of delivery (online system being used such as skype, zoom etc.);
- Student's ability to access this delivery system (e.g. 95 of 100 students have home computer or telephone access which will enable continued educational services);
- Identify which portions of classes or programs are offered online;
- Identify attendance records and methods for testing or tracking progression;
- Provide information regarding how you will deal with lab, or "hands on" portions of the education;

Provide information regarding continuation, or postponement of externships if applicable.

DECISION TO CEASE OPERATIONS (TEMPORARY OR OTHERWISE)

If your school decides to postpone classes or cease operations temporarily, please notify your Program Specialist of this via email and provide the date of cessation/postponement as well as an anticipated date to resume operations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released [interim guidance](#) for administrators of colleges and universities in planning and preparing for COVID-19, along with recommended response measures for those with the virus in their community;
- The CDC has also released [guidance](#) for institutions of higher education (IHEs) related to foreign travel. The CDC has asked IHEs to consider postponing or canceling upcoming student foreign exchange programs and recommends IHEs consider asking current program participants to return to their home country, as well as asking students participating in study abroad programs to return to the United States. The CDC recommends that IHEs consult with state and local health authorities on the best approach for when and how study abroad students might return;
- The U.S. Department of Education has issued [guidance](#) related to compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) for those that are impacted by COVID-19. The Department's guidance offers flexibility under its existing authority to help IHEs continue to serve students.

Other resources include:

- The U.S. Department of Education has a [website](#) with information related to COVID-19;
- The American College Health Association has issued a document on [what campuses need to know](#) about COVID-19, as well as [guidelines](#) for campus health staff and administrators preparing for COVID-19.

As the U.S. Department of Education has offered flexibility to IHEs, we encourage our members to consider whether they may need to offer similar flexibility related to their own statutory and regulatory requirements so that their IHEs can remain compliant and continue to serve students.

If you have any questions, please contact your Program Specialist.

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