

PREPARING FOR PARTIAL REOPENING OF CUNY CAMPUSES — 8/27/20

(Guidance for PSC Chapter Chairs)

The CUNY academic year started Aug. 26; PSC has called on CUNY not to reopen campuses until the union is satisfied that the college buildings in use are safe to work in. PSC has reviewed draft reopening plans from most colleges and finally received CUNY-approved plans yesterday, on the first day of classes.

Many of the plans address in detail the Guidelines for reopening that CUNY put out in July; some colleges, but not all, included PSC representatives on their reopening committees as the State requires. Frequently, plans do not specify which classes, labs and administrative functions will be conducted on campus at the start of the fall semester or what buildings will be in use. The PSC H&S Watchdogs have developed a checklist of conditions they think campuses should be meeting for campuses to open safely and have identified members willing to go to campus to see if these conditions have been met. The conditions queried cover hygiene, ventilation, cleaning and disinfecting protocols, screening to come to campus, testing, etc.

DETERIORATING INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition, because so many buildings are decades old and have a history of indoor air and water problems, the Watchdogs have raised with faculty chapter chairs a series of specific technical questions about actions colleges have taken or not to upgrade building ventilation—use of outside air, filtration and air flow/transfer—and to clean and flush water systems—that go beyond what NY State and CUNY Guidelines require. The PSC reviewed all the draft plans received and raised these questions/issues with chapter chairs last week.

Because of what science is now telling us about indoor airborne COVID transmission, it is critically important that CUNY administration provide answers to these questions for each building where members will be working before the union can be confident it is safe for members to work there. Pres. Bowen has sent a letter to members explaining the union's call to CUNY not to reopen colleges until conditions are safe.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE

Given this context, and the fact that colleges are likely to re-open anyway and that some faculty (but not all CLTs and HEOs) are choosing to be on campus for teaching or research, PSC members and leaders will no doubt look to the union for guidance on how to respond.

- Members assigned to work on campus have to work and grieve (as is the case with many provisions under the contract) unless they receive an accommodation, but they should notify the union that they are working on campus and fill out the webform on the PSC website.
- If members encounter problems or find that the campus' plan is not being implemented, they should take action: 1) contact the campus COVID Coordinator and 2) let the campus chapter know you have done so. Also, report the problem to the union on the [webform](#) on the PSC website. If CUNY is in violation of [state-mandated health and safety precautions](#) (scroll down to higher education), you can [file a complaint](#) with NY State. (See links at the end of this document.) Campus chapters need to be on alert to pressure the college administrations and supervisors immediately when the union hears from members who are being directed to go into unsafe conditions. Collectively, the union can take actions to address unsafe conditions, but the union must know the problems exist! (See links at the bottom of this document.)

- Chapters are requested to inform the H&S Watchdogs at hswatchdogs@pscmail.org what campus buildings members are working in. The Watchdogs will update available information regularly.
- If there is inadequate water/soap in bathrooms, a failure to use face coverings, inadequate physical distancing and signage, and/or inadequate cleaning/disinfecting of high-use surfaces, contact the campus COVID Coordinator, let the campus chapter know and [submit a webform](#) on the PSC website.
- If the following Essential Ventilation Requirements have not been met in buildings where members are working, contact the PSC via the webform and let the campus chapter know. If you are not sure about ventilation conditions, raise questions with the college Director of Environmental Health & Safety, or the VP for Facilities, or the Director of Buildings & Grounds.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CHECKLIST

If a Campus Guidelines Plan has adhered to the CUNY Guidelines for Safe Reopening (p. 42), it should be possible for them to provide the following information for each occupied space within each building. Keep track of the information by building and room number.

1. **What is the recommended physical distancing?** *NOTE:* The 6-foot radius of separation presumes optimal ventilation; greater distancing (10-12 feet) is needed if ventilation is less than optimal.
 - If your campus plan recommends physical distancing of 6-feet, it is essential to examine ventilation in all spaces being used.
2. **Do all occupied areas have optimal levels of ventilation?** *(Remember, the optimum is to maximize bringing outside air indoors.)* Optimal indoor ventilation is defined as meeting the minimum outside air ventilation rate as specified by ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 62.1 2019. The outside air values are 10 Cubic Feet per Minute (CFM)/person for classrooms and labs and 5 CFM/person for offices. The rates for corridors and bathrooms are not specified but given the difficulty in maintaining distancing in these spaces, a rate of at least 5 CFM/person is expected.
 - You should ask: **What is the outside air ventilation rate in CFM/person in each area that is being used?** Include auxiliary rooms such as bathrooms.
 - If the measurements of outside air ventilation rates are not available, ask: **What has the campus done to bring outside air into in each classroom, lab, office, or other space that is being used?** The response should include the following elements:
 - ✓ % of outside air (the ideal of 100% is not attainable by older systems so note either the % of outside air and/or the % of recirculated air that is achieved)
 - ✓ whether the dampers were opened (they should be open)
 - ✓ the schedule for HVAC operation (ideally 24/7 but the system should run for at least 2 hours after the building has emptied of people)
 - ✓ disabling of any demand-controlled ventilation (like a single thermostat)
 - ✓ confirmation that all HVAC systems in buildings in use are running for maximum occupancy
3. **What is the level of filtration (MERV filters) in the building's air handling system?** MERV13 or higher provides greater filtration but many systems can only use lower MERV ratings (e.g. MERV8)

- 4. Has the HVAC system been reviewed by HVAC professionals? Who did the review?**
- 5. Do occupied areas with recirculated air have air purifiers equipped with HEPA filters?**
- 6. Have the hot/cold water systems been flushed and inspected? Who did the work?**

The union does not administer the colleges, management does, and it is their responsibility to do so safely. The union's responsibility is to demand the information needed to determine if conditions are safe, inform the college and union members of unsafe conditions, raise objections and fight for safety.

RELATED LINKS

PSC webform to report health and safety issues regarding reopening:

<https://psc-cuny.org/issues/form/protect-members-lives-and-health>

State-mandated health and safety precautions (scroll down to higher education):

<https://forward.ny.gov/phase-four-industries>

File a complaint with New York State:

<https://forms.ny.gov/s3/Department-of-Labor-COVID-19-Complaint-Form>