

**Washtenaw County Health Department Recommends
all local U-M students stay in place, avoid gatherings**

Recommendation follows identification of 14 cases of COVID-19 B117 variant

YPSILANTI, Mich., Jan 27, 2021 – To help slow the spread of COVID-19 - including the more easily transmitted B.1.1.7. variant - the Washtenaw County Health Department is recommending that all currently enrolled University of Michigan students living on or near the Ann Arbor campus stay in place at their campus-area addresses starting today through Feb. 7.

This recommendation, which has the full support of the university, is directed at all U-M undergraduate, graduate and professional students enrolled in the Winter 2021 term and currently residing on or off campus in Washtenaw County. Students are being asked to remain at their campus-area addresses and to not gather with others outside of their household members. Students are permitted to leave their residence only to participate in limited activities, including in-person classes, work or research that cannot be completed remotely, obtaining food and medical care and other approved activities.

County and university public health officials collaborated closely on the recommendation, which is designed to further limit in-person gatherings and slow the increasing spread of cases of COVID-19 in the community, including the more easily transmitted B.1.1.7 variant, which takes longer to identify through the COVID-19 testing process.

Since the beginning of the winter term, increased testing of U-M students has identified 175 COVID-19 cases among students in the U-M community, 14 of which have been determined to be the B.1.1.7 variant.

Control of the COVID-19 epidemic and containment of this new COVID-19 variant is necessary to protect the public health of the campus community and residents of Washtenaw County, the health department says. That requires the health department and the university to work together proactively.

“We are very concerned about the potential for this variant to spread quickly,” says Jimena Loveluck, MSW, health officer for Washtenaw County. “We are working closely with the university to take coordinated steps to control the current outbreak and understand the situation more fully.

“We also recognize that these are difficult actions and appreciate the university’s continued partnership. This stay-in-place recommendation will help us reduce the impact of the variant and COVID-19 in general as we investigate.”

The stay-in-place recommendation is in place immediately through 11:59pm on Feb 7. More stringent actions may be necessary if this outbreak continues to grow and additional variant clusters are identified. All U-M students living on or near campus also are strongly encouraged

to participate in free weekly testing provided by the university. Undergraduates living on or coming to campus are required by the university to be tested weekly.

“This recommendation is intended to slow any possible spread and give us a better understanding of the extent of the presence of B.1.1.7 variant on campus and to aid in containing any current spread. We encourage all students to stay in place and only leave their residence for essential activities, including getting tested weekly for COVID-19,” said Dr. Rob Ernst, associate vice president for Student Life at U-M and executive director of the University Health Service.

The recommendation outlines the following exceptions, with strict adherence to mandatory testing requirements and other preventive measures:

- To attend in-person classes, including instructional labs, and access essential technology at designated study areas that provide for single-person study space.
- To pick up food, attend medical appointments, pick up medication, or obtain COVID-19 testing or vaccination.
- To work, including in-person research, only if the work cannot be done remotely.
- To participate in clinical rotations, student teaching or other off-campus experiential learning assignments that are held in person, with approval and disclosure to the organization that both the school and site are aware and supportive of continued participation.
- For physical activity outdoors in groups of no more than two.
- For religious practice activities.
- For volunteering in approved vaccination and testing efforts.

On Jan. 16, 2021, the first Michigan case of new COVID-19 variant, B.1.1.7 was identified in an adult living in Washtenaw County by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and two additional cases in adults living in Washtenaw County who were in close contact with the first case were confirmed on Jan. 21, 2021. To date, there are 14 confirmed cases of the COVID-19 B.1.1.7 variant associated with the U-M community.

This variant is more contagious than the disease caused by predominate strain (SARS-CoV-2). It is not currently known if clinical outcomes or disease severity from B.1.1.7 are increased compared to the virus that has been circulating across the United States for months. The B.1.1.7 variant is approximately 50 percent more transmissible, which is likely to lead to faster spread of the virus and increases in the number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.

As defined in the Jan 22, 2021 [MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order](#), “household” means a group of persons living together in a shared dwelling with common kitchen or bathroom facilities. In dwellings with shared kitchen or bathroom facilities occupied by 20 or more unrelated persons, households are defined by individuals who share a bedroom. It is recommended that masks be worn inside these dwellings or households any time individuals are outside of their bedrooms.

U-M students are encouraged to seek asymptomatic COVID-19 testing on campus through the [Community Sampling and Tracking Program](#). Students with symptoms should seek testing on campus at University Health Service (uhs.umich.edu).

The Health Department also is planning additional no-cost COVID-19 [testing events](#) for the broader community, or use the state test locator Michigan.gov/CoronavirusTest.

Local COVID-19 information is available at www.washtenaw.org/covid19. Health Department staff are available to answer questions. Call 734-544-6700 or email L-wchdcontact@washtenaw.org.

Additional Resources

Washtenaw County Health Department www.washtenaw.org/covid19
[Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) on Jan 27 stay in place recommendation
For local testing, see www.washtenaw.org/covid19test or Michigan.gov/CoronavirusTest.
University of Michigan <https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/>

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