Working with students on their responsibility to self and others
Fall 2021
Based on presentation created by Patty Oehmke
Adapted for instructors by Jim Lucas
Michigan State University
Presentation Goals

- Outline steps for MSU employees to use in managing students’ compliance with COVID policies and procedures
- Provide resources related to MSU COVID policies and procedures
Why manage disruptive/negative behavior

- If a student comes to your class/lab/workplace and is not in compliance with the MSU COVID-19 policies, you should have a conversation with the student.
- Allowing the student to remain in the class/lab/workplace creates a public health risk.
- Talking with the student directly, as soon as the behavior happens, often will resolve the issue and help prevent additional instances of non-compliance.
- If you make exceptions or do not confront inappropriate behavior, you signal to the student and others that the rules do not matter.
STEP 1: Be proactive

• We have provided template language about the COVID policies and recommendations for class attendance on the Keep Teaching Website

• Use these suggestions and build appropriate policies into your syllabus.

• In addition to putting information into the syllabus, you might consider:
  • Put announcements in D2L and build reminders into class presentations, emails, or other updates
  • Talk about the policies on the first day of class (work) with your students
What if something happens?

• Most of the time speaking with the students proactively will help avoid negative behaviors.
• A majority of the compliance issues MSU has experienced with COVID have related to misunderstandings or forgetfulness *not* bad intentions.
• If you do find that you have to have a conversation with a student about their actions then proceed to Step 2.
STEP 2: Get in the right mindset

• Take a moment to compose yourself; difficult conversations are stressful, and you do not want your stress to derail the interaction
• Do not rush in to confront individual and do not assume ill intent or that you will be challenged; the situation is often a mistake or a misunderstanding
• Be mindful of your status, positionality, and identities; some students may not respond well to authority or may be triggered by aspects of your identity
  • Mindful difficult conversations: https://www.mindfulschools.org/personal-practice/difficult-conversations/
STEP 3: Set the stage

• **Make Body Language Your Superpower** (video)
  - Consider how you can apply posture, positioning, hand gestures, and audience reading when you engage with other people
• Move individual to a space that is private and free of distractions or interruptions
• If other students ask what you are doing or what is going on, remember it is confidential and you should not share details with them
• Have the basic facts you need to engage in an educational conversation and be prepared to ask and answer questions
STEP 4: Focus on facts and education

• Describe for the student the behavior that needs to be addressed (e.g., you are not wearing your mask correctly)

• Cite specific actions that need to be corrected and how they violate policy; take an educational approach as, most likely, the student made a mistake

• As warranted or needed, consider the following tactics:
  • Explain how the student’s behavior affects the learning environment, peers, you, and them.
  • Ask the student to explain what happened in a neutral way and listen without being angry or accusing.
  • Be prepared to help the student learn how to correct the problem and avoid making a mistake in the future.
STEP 5: Listen & Empathize

- **Power of Listening**
  - How do we switch the “me” part of listening off & re-focus these thoughts onto the person speaking?

- **Validation, communication through empathy**
  - How does showing empathy impact the other person involved in your conversation? Does their position (happy or angry) play a role?

- Listen to the student’s explanation calmly and provide validation to their concerns
  - Example: “I understand that you have been really busy lately, but masking is really important”
  - Example: “I’ve been late and forgotten my mask before too, but we’ll need to get you one before you can come into class.”
STEP 6: Respond

• Outline for the student what needs to happen to address the situation
  • Example: “We need to find you a mask,” or “You need to either mask up or leave the classroom until you have a mask.”

• As warranted, explain the consequences of the behavior if not resolved and/or if it continues

• Inform the student that you must report the situation and that continued non-compliance could result in additional consequences

• Give the student choices, especially if they are refusing to comply
Managing a major disruption

• Using the previous steps should resolve most behavior problems with students.

• If the student refuses to leave, causes a major disruption, or seems to pose a threat to sell for others, then consider the following actions:
  • Dismiss the class and follow up with them in an email later
  • if you sense danger then dial 911

• Dismissing class or calling for emergency services should be a last resort. Please do not dismiss the class until you have tried to speak with the student.
STEP 7: Report

• If you talk with a student about a COVID issue, even if they are agreeable and it is a mistake, you should complete the Qualtrics survey.

• This survey allows campus to keep track of the number of times a student has an issue across time and space; a single instance will not warrant any conduct procedures.

• When completing the form, stick to just the facts and what was actually said; do not put in any of your opinions or interpretations.
  • Good example: the student admitted to being confused about the testing process and left the classroom when asked.
  • Inappropriate example: the student seems incapable of following directions and has some mental health concerns.
  • Do not ascribe any behaviors to a students’ identity, health status, political beliefs,
Resources and information
MSU COVID resources

- Together We Will
- Keep Teaching – instructor-facing
- Keep Learning – student-facing
COVID Safety Resources

- Staying Safe
- Isolation on Campus
- How To Create a COVID Bubble and Why You Should Consider One
- Spartan Health Screening Form
- Cloth Face Coverings – Do’s & Don’ts
- Cloth Face Coverings: Fact Sheet
- Masks are MSU’s Best Defense
- General Cleaning Procedures
Self-Care and Wellness Resources

- CAPS – Virtual Care Kit
- Keep Learning: Mental Health
- What do you do if someone close to you is confirmed positive for COVID-19?
- Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities
- Office of Institutional Equity