

**Bellarmine University**

**Doctor of Physical Therapy Program**

**COVID-19 and Clinical Education Recommendations**

The Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Bellarmine University recognizes the unique and unprecedented challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic faced by our clinical partners. We also recognize our responsibility to continue to advance the training and education of the workforce of tomorrow. Although CAPTE has provided some flexibility to clinical education expectations and duration, there is still a fundamental need to provide sufficient opportunity for students to practice, apply and demonstrate competency of entry-level performance skills prior to graduation.

In an effort to preserve clinical education learning opportunities for our students, the program has identified the following actions and student expectations to support our clinical partners. The program also recognizes the critical need for flexibility for start dates and duration of clinical experiences based on the unique circumstances of each clinical site.

Finally, we know that guidelines may change as we continue to navigate the impact of the pandemic. We will remain in communication throughout the clinical experiences and encourage you to contact us if you have any thoughts, questions, concerns, or suggestions. We are in this together to continue to grow our profession and maintain high academic and professional standards.

**COVID-19 SPECIFIC TRAINING**

* Students will complete annual OSHA training and review via online MedBridge platform. Courses will include:
  + Personal Protective Equipment
  + Bloodborne Pathogens & Standard Precautions
  + Respiratory Hazards & Protection
* Students will complete a personal health questionnaire prior to each clinical experience and submit to Site Coordinator
* Students will complete eLearning courses on the APTA’s Learning Center specific to the Post-Acute COVID-19 Exercise and Rehabilitation (PACER) Project. Students will complete the following two courses in addition to any population-specific (i.e. Pediatrics or Geriatric Considerations) courses related to their clinical experience.
  + COVID-19: Clinical Best Practices in Physical Therapy Management
  + PACER Series: COVID-19 Specific Considerations
* If student will be participating in services delivered via telehealth, then they will be encouraged to complete courses housed within the APTA Learning Center “Telehealth Catalog of Courses”.

**SELF-REPORTING ILLNESS**

* Students will be expected to IMMEDIATELY self-report signs or symptoms of illness. Student should notify the program Director of Clinical Education (DCE), the Clinical Instructor, and the site Employee Health (or Rehab Supervisor if appropriate).
* Per CDC guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> as of 5/6/2020), COVID-19 symptoms to be monitored and reported include:
  + Cough
  + Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  + Fever
  + Chills
  + Repeated shaking with chills
  + Muscle pain
  + Headache
  + Sore throat
  + New loss of smell
* Exposure: If student is informed that they were exposed to someone who tests positive to COVID-19 at any time during the clinical experience, either in or out of the facility, the student will immediately contact DCE, clinical instructor, and site coordinator.
* Testing considerations: If a student requires testing to be “cleared” to begin a clinical experience or because they present with symptoms, they will first seek options through their primary care provider, city- or state-sponsored testing, or university testing if available. If a student requires testing due to exposure during patient care, then the DCE will discuss testing options with the clinical partner.
* Mental health concerns: Students are to be reminded frequently that a variety of options are offered through university services to help monitor and support the emotional and mental health of our students. <https://www.bellarmine.edu/studentaffairs/counselingcenter/>
* Insurance: While on clinical rotations, students maintain personal health insurance and the school maintains professional liability insurance. At this time, there is no indication for a change in this original policy.

**SOCIAL DISTANCING**

* Students will be expected to social distance in facilities when appropriate and follow site-specific guidelines on management of space and patient care
* Students will also be expected to limit travel and high-exposure activities when not in the clinic to minimize transmission risk
* If a student travels out of state while on a clinical experience, they will report plans and destinations to clinical instructor prior to travel.

**SITE-SPECIFIC DETERMINATIONS**

* Students will follow site-specific guidance on what specific PPE should be worn when engaged in patient care and during time in the clinic. Sites are expected to provide appropriate PPE for patient care, although students may be required to bring a reusable mask if necessary. If the availability of PPE becomes a barrier to student placement, then the university will consider providing students with PPE.
* It is recognized that there is an ongoing struggle with the PPE supply chain and there may be a need to preserve available PPE. This may result in limitations placed on specific patient populations that a student may treat (such as patients on isolation for COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 causes).
* Students are NOT fit-tested for N-95 masks by the university. Therefore, students will not be engaging in patient care where the patient is on airborne precautions or an N-95 mask is indicated.
* Students will be compliant with temperature checks upon clinical site entry if indicated.
* The student may be asked to keep a list of patients treated if contact tracing is later needed.
* If traveling from out-of-state for a clinical experience, the student will seek guidance by the site coordinator if they are expected to self-quarantine for a period of time (typically 14-days) prior to starting clinical experience.

**STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

* Student are expected to demonstrate Professional Behaviors as defined by the APTA at all times. However, when dealing with challenges caused by the current pandemic, it is particularly important to recognize the need for the following student behaviors:
  + Flexibility- Plans made for clinical experiences may change abruptly and without warning. Likewise, policies and requirements for our clinical partners are continuously evolving based on new information and data. We must be flexible and adaptable to these changes.
  + Respect- Our clinical partners are facing unique and unprecedented challenges, and we must be respectful and aware of those challenges.
  + Open-mind- Students are expected to be open and adaptable to alternative learning experiences (which may include multiple clinical instructors, multiple students, simulations, etc.)
  + Problem solvers- Students are encouraged to actively engage in how our profession addresses and identifies solutions to new problems.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

* The American Council of Academic Physical Therapy: <https://acapt.org/covid19-response>
* Bellarmine University: <https://www.bellarmine.edu/coronavirus/>