

Student Film Production: COVID Best Practices Guidelines

- All students are expected to follow university expectations related to COVID 19 mitigation. Monitor Northwestern University's COVID webpage frequently, as guidance is subject to change throughout the year:
<https://www.northwestern.edu/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/campus-return/guidelines/index.html>
- All guidelines in this document are subject to change, according to public health and industrial norms for Covid mitigation on film shoots. This current update was sourced from the Association of Independent Commercial Producers (AICP) guidelines, which received input from many commercial labor unions (IATSTE, DGA, SGA/AFTRA), and was recommended by the Chicago Film Office for all colleges/universities over the 2020-21 academic year.
- This document currently addresses safety guidelines that are *strongly encouraged* on curricular and extracurricular student film productions at Northwestern University, whether conducted on-campus or off. These guidelines are not currently subject to RTVF, School of Communication, or Northwestern University enforcement. However, students, faculty, and staff are advised to refer to them for on-set safety as the Covid19 pandemic continues, and to be ready to adhere to them once again, in the event of changing conditions that require enforcement of these guidelines for safe continuation of student productions. Productions involving cast and crew from outside Northwestern, or productions with crews of over 15 students are *most strongly encouraged* to adhere to these guidelines.
- Students are *not currently required* to take the Panopto multiple choice test on these guidelines in order to conduct shoots or check out equipment from the CAGE. In the event of another surge in covid infections and deaths and/or the spread of a new and more dangerous variant, RTVF may return to administering this test to ensure that students are familiar with necessary safety procedures.
- **VACCINATIONS:** Northwestern continues to require COVID-19 vaccination for all students, faculty and staff. Currently, more than 98% of the Northwestern community are vaccinated. As before, community members may request an exception to the requirement based on personal health conditions or sincerely held religious beliefs. Because boosters remain a critical tool for minimizing severe illness in individuals, we strongly recommend boosters for those who can obtain them. The bivalent booster that became available in September 2022 has been formulated to provide protection against new variants that have caused significant outbreaks throughout the year.

Principles

- health and safety of the general public, including all production staff, crew and cast, is the highest priority
- medical expertise must always guide our decision making
- minimize risk whenever possible
- always consider ethical concerns regarding risk
- realize who assumes risk (e.g. individual vs crew vs broader university community)
- do more with less (e.g. use “economy of means,” smallest crews possible, etc)
- plan for less production time (e.g. everything will take more time)

Guidelines

- In general, all crew members should be NU students who are currently enrolled in Northwestern classes.
- All non-NU crew must abide by the [Expectations for Visitors to Campus](#) policies.
- All Northwestern students, faculty and staff must follow [University health and safety guidelines](#) regarding required vaccinations, masking and testing.
- The Northwestern Symptom Tracker application is not currently being used, but pandemic developments may require the return of its use in the future. Current information about the Symptom Tracker may be found here: <https://www.northwestern.edu/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/health/health-monitoring/symptom-tracker/>
- Masks required at all times for crew
- Cast members (or documentary subjects) should take masks off ONLY during rehearsals and filming
- All cast (or documentary subjects) who are NOT NU students, faculty or staff will be treated as “visitors to campus” under current NU guidelines, see [Expectations for Visitors to Campus](#) for specific guidelines to follow.
- Social distancing will be enforced on set, maintaining social distancing whenever possible
- Plentiful sanitizing stations and hand sanitizers will be made available.
- Filming that CAN occur outdoors SHOULD occur outdoors if possible. (e.g. this might mean concept adaptation, script rewrites, etc.)
- Filming which CAN occur on-campus SHOULD occur on campus for maximum risk management and liability protection.
- Risk Management Plan (RMP) signer is considered the ultimate COVID monitor (e.g. producer), but ALL crew members should adhere to and be responsible for best practices.
- Crew call times and placement should be staggered, to help maintain social distancing
- Departments will inhabit the area in front of camera in shifts to keep distance (e.g. Art Department sets the scene then leaves, Lighting goes next, last is Camera, then hero talent.)
- Only those required near camera when actors are present will be there
- As always, actors will be treated with the utmost care and even more so when they cannot wear a mask. Blocking and number of actors will take social distance into consideration
- There must be a COVID safety monitor on set charged with addressing issues as they arise and given the authority to have unsafe practices or conditions corrected

- Proper utilization of PPE must be built into each production schedule and budget
- Within 24 hours prior to first day of filming, all cast and crew members (whether NU or non-NU) should be tested and receive a negative COVID test result, either PCR or rapid test is acceptable. NO ONE should be allowed on set who has received a recent positive test within the last 14 days. For more information on non-NU testing, see [Visitor Testing](#) and since all non-NU cast are considered as “Visitors” they can get testing at NU rapid testing sites.
- See more info below about use of SymptomTracker app as additional tool for affirmation of compliance by COVID Monitors on set. Confirmation of a Green SymptomTracker of everyone in the cast and crew is required.
- The RTVF equipment Cage is back to normal circulation procedures stated in the RTVF Handbook. Two exceptions: we will be limiting the number of items on checkouts to 100, and if you are doing a large check out (50+) you must have a set checkout and check in time confirmed by the Cage Manager, Rachael Moeller rachael@northwestern.edu , before proceeding with the checkout.

Violations

Violations are not currently enforced by RTVF. However, in the event that changes in pandemic conditions require the RTVF department to return to enforcing these guidelines, failure to comply with these guidelines could result in:

- CAGE access barred to RTVF equipment
- Violation reported as a Northwestern University student code-of-conduct violation, receiving hearing/punishment as outlined in student handbook:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/student-conduct/student-code-of-conduct/scope-of-the-code/index.html>

COVID Monitors (On Set)

- All student productions should have a designated COVID on-set monitor (e.g. producer)
- Any student crew member should be allowed to “opt out” at any time (e.g. self isolating, unsafe work conditions, etc). Work is provided by consent.
- All work must comply with current local and state guidelines. If you plan on getting a Permit for Filming from the Chicago Film Office, you’ll need to additionally adhere to the [City of Chicago's Be Safe Film and Television Production Guidelines](#).

Monitoring/Testing:

- When arriving, conduct in-person screening of cast/crew upon entry into workplace to verify no presence of COVID-19 symptoms. In the event that the SymptomTracker app is reinstated, it is recommended as all cast/crew just need to show Green badge to verify self-attestation to no symptoms.
- If a shift is greater than 5 hours, consider conducting mid-shift screening to verify no presence of COVID-19 symptoms (e.g. asking verbally if any cast/crew members feel sick or feverish, etc)
- If symptoms detected, student needs to report via COVID reporting procedures in [NU Return to Campus](#) guidelines and SymptomTracker (when in use). They should follow the university procedures outlined below for quarantine and isolation, and take appropriate action whether they are fully vaccinated or unvaccinated, as directed.
- If cast/crew is identified as being COVID-19 positive by testing, CDC cleaning and disinfecting should be performed according to [CDC guidelines](#) on any equipment that they touched or used, or in spaces that they occupied. See [NU Procedures for Positive Cases of COVID-19](#) for more details if you test positive.
- Where appropriate, notify cast/crew who have been exposed. COVID monitor SHOULD NOT identify a cast/crew member who tested positive by name. The COVID monitor should ask the cast/crew members to self-report for exposure via NU online portal. See [NU Procedures for Positive Cases of COVID-19](#) for more details.
- **Quarantine and Isolation for close contact with a positive COVID case for FULLY VACCINATED individuals:** Those who are fully vaccinated or who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past three months who are identified via contact tracing are not required to quarantine. However, they need to email covidcasemanagement@northwestern.edu, which will connect them to Case Management. Case Management will follow up to determine next steps, including arranging for them to obtain a COVID-19 PCR test 3-5 days after their initial exposure. Additionally, they need to mask indoors for 14 days after their initial exposure or upon obtaining a negative COVID test conducted 3-5 days after exposure. If an individual tests positive, they are required to isolate for 10 days even if they are asymptomatic, regardless of their vaccination status.
- **Quarantine and Isolation for close contact with a positive COVID case for UNVACCINATED individuals:** Those who are unvaccinated and are identified as a close contact via contact tracing are required to quarantine for 14 days. They need to email covidcasemanagement@northwestern.edu, which will connect them to Case Management. Case Management will follow up to determine next steps, including arranging for them to obtain a COVID-19 PCR test 3-5 days after their initial exposure. If an individual tests positive, they are

required to isolate for 10 days even if they are asymptomatic, regardless of their vaccination status.

- More info about quarantine and self-isolation procedures [can be found here](#).
- Students who plan to participate in film shoots with non-NU visitors (e.g. cast) should consider more frequent testing that matches frequency of filming (e.g. if you are working on a film shoot every weekend, consider getting tested every week).
- Cast/crew should not report to work, or be allowed to remain at work, if sick or symptomatic (e.g. with cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever of 100.4 degrees or above, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, or other CDC-identified symptoms), and sick or symptomatic employees should be encouraged to seek a COVID-19 test at a state or local government or university testing center, healthcare center or other testing locations
- If anyone feels sick within two weeks of being on an NU film shoot, this should be reported via the Northwestern Report and Incident portal:
<https://www.northwestern.edu/risk/secure/report-an-incident.html>

COVID Reporting

Coronavirus / COVID-19 Anonymous Reporting:

- In response to University's Coronavirus/COVID-19 Policy, all Northwestern Faculty and Staff that have a confirmed COVID-19 diagnoses must complete the Coronavirus/COVID-19 **Reporting Form** here <https://www.northwestern.edu/risk/secure/report-an-incident.html>
- All Students, Faculty and Staff that plan to or are currently self-isolating must complete the Coronavirus/COVID-19 Reporting Form, see link above.

Hotline

- In Evanston, a hotline (847-467-8840) is available for faculty, staff and students to report concerns. (e.g. lack of compliance on set to guidelines listed above, no designated COVID monitors on set, failure to comply with COVID-19 policies, et al)
- In Chicago, a hotline (312-503-3437) is available for faculty, staff and students to report concerns.

Graduate Students

- Additionally, graduate students and postdoctoral trainees should report their concerns to The Graduate School by writing to covid19compliance@northwestern.edu.

Graduate students may also contact their chairs or others to discuss their concerns.

Sources

NU RTVF guidelines are sourced from AICP Guidelines, provided to the department by the Chicago Film Office, as well as other university, local, state and national guidelines.

AICP General Practices and Screening Procedures

<https://www.aicp.com/business-resources/business-affairs-information/aicp-guidelines/>

Symptom Tracker App

The Symptom Tracker App is not currently in use at Northwestern. The following information is provided in the event that the University activates it once again.

All Northwestern students, faculty and staff must follow [University health and safety guidelines](#) regarding required vaccinations, masking and testing. However, there are some approved exceptions for the use of masks in production and performance classes. **While we are prohibited from asking anyone about their vaccination status, although an individual can willingly share, we recommend the use of SymptomTracker whenever the app is activated by the university.** You are advised to use it as an additional reaffirming tool to verify the health of participants for in-person activities, such as working each day on a student film set.

SymptomTracker functionality provides three levels of health/compliance status (Red, Yellow or Green) based on three criteria:

1. Health attestation on COVID-19 symptoms
2. Negative COVID-19 test
3. Testing compliance

Red = A positive test or for individuals who are currently experiencing symptoms or who are in quarantine or isolation. **Not permitted** to come to campus.

Yellow = Although there isn't a positive test or any health attestation symptoms, this individual is not in compliance with required testing. **Not permitted** to come to campus.

Green = No positive tests or health attestation symptoms, and this individual is in compliance with required testing. **Permitted** to come to campus.

More info on how to download the App to your phone or use a web-browser version, see:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/health/health-monitoring/symptom-tracker/>