

BIRTHWISE COVID SAFETY PLAN 2021

Updated 2021.07.25

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INTRODUCTION

Birthwise Midwifery School has written the following policies and procedures to reduce the risk of COVID exposure and spread while conducting classes in-person during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The policies and procedures are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and State of Maine and are subject to change as new information becomes available. If these policies and procedures change, all students, staff, and faculty will be notified.

Guiding Priorities for Decision Making

The following priorities drive our decision making and planning process:

- Safety of students, staff, faculty, preceptors, clients, and the broader communities we engage with
- Community – building and supporting our Birthwise Community
- Equity Lens – assessing the impact of our decisions and actions
- Sustainability – ensuring our long-term ability to grow and thrive and continue to carry out our mission to train skilled and compassionate midwives.

We view the following as essential to the sustainability of Birthwise in a crisis:

- Maintaining the quality of our program
- Retaining skilled staff and faculty, which requires support of staff and faculty physical, mental, and emotional well-being
- Engaging students and holding them accountable for their role in maintaining a safe, supportive, high quality education environment

MAINTAINING HEALTHY OPERATIONS

The following processes are intended to reduce exposure to COVID on campus. They apply to ALL STAFF, FACULTY, AND STUDENTS who will be on campus. We have also included safety recommendations for preceptors and students in clinical experiences.

Virtual Learning and Work Options

To ensure that students, faculty, and staff can limit exposure to risk, decrease total number of folks on campus at any one time, and allow for flexibility, we will utilize technology for virtual learning and work from home.

Work from Home

Staff will be allowed and encouraged to work from home as needed. To ensure smooth operations at least 1 administrative staff person and 1 academic staff person will be on campus on all days when students and faculty are present for regularly scheduled in-person class.

Virtual Learning

All courses that can be reasonably conducted online, without compromising the quality of education or acquisition of skills, may be moved online to decrease overall number of people on campus.

Gatherings and Visitors

General

All programming for anyone who is not a student enrolled in the Midwifery Program at Birthwise has been moved to virtual attendance. This includes doula training, campus tours and open houses, and special events.

The Birth House may occasionally host client education courses and other events in spaces typically occupied by Birthwise Midwifery School. These events will be scheduled for times when students are not on campus.

Student

Students are welcome to gather on campus for small study group sessions outside of normal class hours. All safety protocols outlined below must always be followed on campus, whether during normal class hours or not.

Staff and Faculty

From time to time, staff and faculty may gather on campus for in person planning meetings. These in-service days will not occur on days when students are on campus for class. All safety protocols outlined below will be followed.

Visitors

Delivery personnel will be instructed to drop packages and mail at the door and will not be allowed to enter the building.

Partners, friends, and children will not be allowed on campus.

Please note that the nature of the on-campus, hands-on classes is such that it is not safe for babes in arms to be in class.

Models for Skills Classes

Birthwise will still offer students the choice to have models hired for their skills practice. These models will be screened in the same way that students, staff, and faculty are on the day they come to campus to model. These models will be required to follow the same policies and procedures outlined below.

Travel to and from Birthwise

Students, staff, and faculty who must travel to Birthwise should practice caution.

Please review the CDC guidance on how to [protect yourself when using public](#)

[transportation](#). At a minimum, hands should be washed as soon as possible after using public transportation.

All students, staff, and faculty who are traveling to Birthwise from another state are responsible for knowing and adhering to [Maine State travel restrictions](#).

Daily Screening

Daily screening is required of ALL STUDENTS, STAFF, and FACULTY who come to campus. Daily screening is also required of all MODELS who are hired for hands on skills practice.

Symptom Survey and Home Temperature Check

Before leaving home to come to campus, students, staff, and faculty must take their own temperature and fill out the Symptom Survey (accessible by link. The link will be included in weekly update emails). If you have a temperature of 100.4 or higher or any symptom listed in the survey, please stay home.

If you stay home due to symptoms, you are expected to alert your course instructor via email, and cc the Academic Director (Beth Bongiolatti Gray) as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours later.

The Symptom Survey will ask about the following CDC identified [COVID symptoms](#):

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

On-Campus Temperature Check

Before class begins, course instructors will take each student's temperature, as well as their own (and that of any models working that day). If a student, model, or faculty member has a temperature of 100.4 or higher, the faculty member will ask them to leave and notify the Institutional Tracker immediately.

Temperature checks should occur in a respectful and safe manner, to protect the health and dignity of both the instructor/faculty member and student.

Students should plan to arrive on campus 15-30 minutes before class begins, to allow time for faculty to take and record temperatures before class begins. If you arrive after class has started, you will be asked to wait outside of the classroom until the next break, at which point faculty will take your temperature and determine if you can join class. PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

Staff will take their temperatures when they arrive on campus for their in-office days.

If someone has a temperature over of 100.4F or higher, they must notify Institutional Tracker immediately, and they will be sent home.

If someone begins to feel unwell during the day, they will be able to use an on-campus thermometer to determine if they have developed a fever. If they have, they will be sent home.

If someone feels unwell but does not have a fever or specific COVID symptoms, they are welcome to leave campus and must notify their instructor (if applicable) and the Institutional Tracker ASAP and within 24 hours of leaving.

On-Campus Safety Protocols

Masks

All students, staff, and faculty must always wear masks while in shared space on campus. If students, staff, or faculty are in a room by themselves, masks may be removed. Please review the CDC guidance on [mask wearing](#).

Birthwise will have a supply of disposable paper masks available for anyone who forgets theirs. We recommend the use of re-usable cloth masks as they are more economical and better for the environment. If you choose to use re-usable cloth masks, you must follow the CDC guidance on [properly handling re-usable masks](#).

Handwashing

Handwashing is one of the best ways to reduce the spread of COVID. Birthwise will ensure that sufficient soap and paper towels are available for increased handwashing.

Please wash your hands as soon as possible after entering the building, before and after touching shared materials in the classroom, before and after touching classmates or models in skills courses that require person to person contact, before putting on your mask, after touching or removing your mask, before and after eating (in addition to times when you would normally wash your hands). Please review the CDC guidance on [handwashing](#).

Hand Sanitizer

If you are not able to wash your hands, you can use hand sanitizer. To be effective, hand sanitizer must contain at least 60% alcohol. Birthwise will have small handpump containers of hand sanitizer in all spaces that might be used for small student

gatherings such as student groups, and in all staff offices. We will have wall mounted hand sanitizer stations at key points throughout campus (classrooms, clinical space, etc). Please read the CDC guidance on [hand sanitizer](#).

Please note that some new brands of hand sanitizer contain harmful ingredients. If you choose to purchase hand sanitizer for personal use, please review the [health advisories](#) to ensure the product you choose is safe.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the Classroom

Birthwise will continue to provide the goggles, gloves, and other personal protective equipment we have always provided. We are increasing our supplies of gloves, masks, wipes, hand sanitizer, soap, and disposable gowns to accommodate COVID safety protocols outlined here. Specific instruction on the proper use of these items will be part of class instruction.

Surface Cleaning with Disinfecting Wipes

Birthwise will provide dispensers of disinfecting wipes in key areas around campus such as the clinical space, living room, personal offices, study spaces, the library, etc.

Students, faculty, and staff are expected to wipe down surfaces/appliances before and after use. These include tables/desks, computer keyboard/mouse, microwave, refrigerator, etc.

If you have concerns about touching wipes, you are welcome to wear gloves while wiping, but you must still take responsibility for wiping down the spaces you touch.

Gloves will be available in all classrooms and common spaces.

Common Spaces

Capacity limits will be posted for all common spaces (library, kitchen, living room). These limits are based on a conservative estimate of how many people can remain in a room while maintaining at least 6ft of distance. We ask that you respect these limits. If limits are not maintained, common spaces will need to be closed.

Traffic patterns are marked in masking tape on rugs inside the building. These ensure a single direction of foot traffic flow and will decrease the likelihood of congestion spots. Please follow the traffic patterns.

Kitchen use will be restricted. Reusable mugs, glassware, silverware, and other dishes will not be available for use. The stove/oven will not be available for use.

Birthwise will provide a limited supply of paper drinkware, plates, and utensils, but strongly encourage you to pack your own dishes and supplies, to be brought home with you at the end of the day.

The refrigerator may be used to store your lunch for the day, but we ask that you not store items in the refrigerator overnight. Please use wipes to wipe down the fridge and microwave before and after using it.

The water purifier may be used. We will provide a mug/pitcher (with clear signage) for you to get the water and then pour into your own mug/thermos/water bottle to reduce contamination due to contact with the spout.

Ventilation

Windows will be left open as often as possible to circulate fresh air into the building. On very hot or cold days, windows will need to remain shut to regulate temperature.

Ceiling fans may not be used with closed windows.

Air conditioning units may be used on days that are particularly hot.

In-window fan units with in + out fans may be used to increase circulation of fresh air into a room.

When appropriate for class content and structure, class should be conducted outside.

Professional Cleaning

Birthwise has contracted with a professional cleaning service to fully clean the building twice per week. Cleaning will happen on Wednesday evenings (between cohorts) and on Saturday or Sunday (between cohorts).

PREPARING FOR WHEN SOMEONE IS SICK

As we prepare to welcome more folks back to campus, and as we head into cold and flu season, we must plan for the possibility that someone will get sick. It is important to remember that anyone could get sick, and the exposure that causes illness could come from roommates, friends or family, classmates at Birthwise, clients, or contact made on errands we need to run around town. Getting sick is not a sign of bad behavior or unwillingness or inability to follow safety guidelines. It is CRITICAL that we approach sick staff, faculty, and students/classmates with empathy and compassion and remember that we are all doing our best to keep ourselves and our community safe. Bullying, ostracizing, or harassing will not be tolerated.

Data and Tracking

To respond effectively to any possible exposure to COVID on campus, we will be recording data on all students, staff, faculty, and models on campus. These data will be stored in digital form with the same safety protocols we use to protect your student

and financial information. All data will be stored and used in compliance with [FERPA](#) and [HIPAA](#) regulations.

These data will be used to assess appropriate times when individuals can return to campus from quarantine, to comply with state health department reporting, to document any flexibilities granted by instructors or the institution for class/work missed due to illness, and to evaluate the efficacy of our safety protocols and identify areas for improvement. These data will also be used to communicate with any individuals who may have come into contact with a sick person at Birthwise, including providing those individuals with information about precautions to reduce their chances of spreading COVID, and to monitor personal symptoms and seek appropriate medical care if needed.

Symptom Tracking

All students, staff, and faculty will fill out the symptom survey before they arrive at Birthwise. The answers to this survey will be collated into a spreadsheet by the Institutional Tracker.

When students arrive on campus, faculty will take student and model temperatures and their own temperature. Staff will take their own temperature when they arrive. If someone has any symptom on the symptom survey, or a temperature of 100.4 or above, they are asked NOT to come to campus, or to leave if they have already arrived. The Institutional Tracker will double check this regularly. If someone has arrived on campus and should not have, the Institutional Tracker will ask them to leave.

If a student, staff member or faculty member develops symptoms over the course of the day at Birthwise, they must leave campus and notify the Institutional Tracker ASAP and within no more than 24 hours. This departure will be noted in the tracking spreadsheet and the date will be used to determine when the individual can safely return to campus.

Exposure Tracking

If a student, staff member or faculty member is exposed to someone who has COVID (someone who is quarantining due to symptoms or has had a positive test), they should plan to quarantine, as outlined in the [CDC guidance](#), and should notify the Institutional Tracker of the reason for their quarantine ASAP and within no more than 24 hours.

Attendance **MUST** be taken and recorded for all courses. Attendance should be recorded by faculty in Sycamore. This information will help us know who may have been exposed if someone becomes ill.

Students should plan to arrive 15-30 minutes early to class in order to allow time for temperature and symptom checks before class begins.

Test Results

Students, staff, and faculty are NOT required to get COVID testing to return to campus. If you choose to get a COVID test at any point, for any reason, please notify the Institutional Tracker of your results ASAP or within no more than 24 hours. This information will help us assess the risk of exposure to classmates, staff and faculty so we can provide appropriate guidance on how to stay healthy and make appropriate decisions about next steps for the campus as a whole.

If you choose to get a COVID test, please follow [CDC recommendations](#) on testing and read about [testing in Maine](#).

Vaccination

Birthwise is currently recommending that students, staff, faculty, and preceptors receive the COVID vaccination if they are willing and able to do so.

At this time, we are NOT requiring that students, staff, faculty, or preceptors receive the vaccine, and we are not tracking vaccination. If these policies change, we will notify all Birthwise community members.

When to Stay Home

Symptoms

We will be following the CDC recommendations for when to stay home. Please stay home if you have any of the following [symptoms](#):

- Fever (temperature of 100.4 or above) or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Positive Viral COVID Test

Please stay home if you have received a positive viral test for COVID.

Close Contact with Infected Individual

Please stay home if you believe you have come into close contact with an individual (outside your cohort) who has COVID.

If a classmate in your cohort did not come to class due to symptoms, or left class due to symptoms, you do NOT need to stay home. Class will continue.

If you have had close contact with someone who has COVID and you:

- *Developed COVID-19 illness within the past 3 months, AND*
- *Have recovered, AND*
- *Remain without COVID-19 symptoms*

You DO NOT need to stay home.

Return to Campus

We will follow the CDC recommendations for when it is safe to return to school. The following language is taken directly from the CDC, [here](#).

I Think or Know I Had COVID and I Had Symptoms...

You can be around others after:

- 10 days since symptoms first appeared, AND
- 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever reducing medications, AND
- COVID symptoms have improved (for example, cough, shortness of breath)

Note: if a medical professional advises you not to return to class, please follow their advice and notify the Executive Director for tracking purposes.

I Tested Positive for COVID

If you continue to have no symptoms, you can be with others after 10 days have passed after you had a positive viral test for COVID.

If you develop symptoms after testing positive, follow the guidance above for “I think or know I had COVID and I had symptoms.”

If you have a positive test result, please notify the Executive Director for tracking purposes.

I Have Been Around a Person with COVID

Anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID should stay home for 14 days after their last exposure to that person.

However, anyone who has had close contact with someone who has COVID AND who:

- Developed COVID-19 illness within the past 3 months, AND
- Has recovered, AND

- Remains without COVID-19 symptoms

DOES NOT need to stay home.

Cancelling Classes

Faculty Need to Isolate

If the instructor is unable to teach class because they need to stay home for any of the reasons outlined above, class will be cancelled. The instructor must alert the Executive Director (ED) and Academic Dean of Faculty (ADF) as soon as they know they must cancel class. The instructor must then notify students via email. Students are encouraged to reach out to their classmates to ensure that everyone knows not to come to campus.

The ED and ADF will work together on the following:

- Recording the faculty illness/COVID related absence (and relevant dates as noted above) AND
- Look for a substitute to cover class on a make-up day or other time arranged with students OR
- Work with the faculty member to arrange a time after the faculty member can safely return to class for class to be held OR
- If no alternate date can be arranged, students will receive a COVID-related incomplete for the course and will need to make up the missed classes in a future semester.
 - COVID-related incompletes will NOT impact SAP or credit load for the semester, tuition and financial aid will not change.

Student, Staff or Faculty Positive COVID-test

If a student, staff member, or faculty member receives a positive COVID test result, they must notify the Institutional Tracker ASAP, and within 24hrs. The Institutional Tracker will work with the individual to determine whether students, staff or faculty on campus were possibly exposed, and will consult with the local health officer to determine the best course forward.

If the timing of exposure, symptoms and test results indicate a likelihood that members of a cohort were exposed to a confirmed case of COVID, classes for that cohort will be cancelled until it is determined that students, staff, and faculty can return to campus. Those who were not exposed (staff and faculty who were not on campus that day, students in the other cohort) will continue work/school as normal.

As a reminder, professional cleaning will regularly take place between cohorts.

For any classes that are cancelled, students will receive a COVID-related incomplete for the course and will need to make up the missed classes in a future semester. The ED and ADF will work together to arrange times for this to happen.

Stay at Home Order

If the governor of Maine issues a stay-at-home order, Birthwise will close campus effective on the date the order goes into effect. Closure will be communicated via email. Campus will not reopen until the stay-at-home order is lifted.

All classes that were scheduled to occur during the stay-at-home order will be cancelled. Students will receive a COVID-related incomplete for the course and will need to make up the missed classes in a future semester. The ED and ADF will work together to arrange times for this to happen.

MAINTAINING SAFETY IN PRECEPTORSHIP

Our first guiding priority for decision making around the pandemic is the safety of students, staff, faculty, preceptors, clients, and the broader communities we engage with. While we recognize that Preceptors are autonomous providers who make their assessments of risk for themselves, their practices, and their clients, Birthwise has a responsibility to our students to ensure their safety and therefore outlines the following recommendations for preceptorship during the pandemic.

Preceptorship During the Pandemic

We encourage preceptors to consider their practice volume, client needs/risks, and their ability to support a preceptorship student during the pandemic before making a choice to take on a new student or continue working with a student that has already been placed. Please speak with the Clinical Director if you have questions.

We encourage students to thoughtfully consider their own risk perception and tolerance before deciding to start or continue a clinical rotation or preceptorship experience. Although risk of exposure to pathogens is always a present reality when working with clients in a healthcare setting, the COVID-19 pandemic increases this risk. Much can be done to mitigate risk, however, neither Birthwise nor preceptors can guarantee students will not be inadvertently exposed to the COVID-19 virus during their clinical experience.

Students should note that delaying preceptorship may extend your time to graduate and may increase your costs (if delaying preceptorship causes you to attend part time or add additional semesters).

Guidelines for Student Safety While in a Clinical Setting

Birthwise expects all students in clinical sites to follow local safety guidelines issued to prevent and reduce transmission of COVID. This may include the following:

- Wearing masks
- Increased hand washing and sanitizing
- Increased surface cleaning and sanitizing
- Not attending clinic, appointments, or births if you have symptoms of a COVID-19 infection or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the previous 14 days
- Not attending visits or births if the client has suspected or confirmed COVID

Preceptor Safety Recommendations

We request that Preceptors be transparent with students about the COVID safety protocols they employ in their own practices so students can make a decision about their personal comfort in starting or continuing clinical work. Please discuss the following with your Birthwise student:

- How you are implementing the current local guidelines and requirements in your midwifery practice, including when masks are required for providers, students, and clients and their support people
- Your practice protocols should a client a client contract COVID-19, including communication with students regarding potential exposures
- The student's level of comfort with or desire to work in your practice during the pandemic

Students may decide not to attend clinic or a birth because of COVID-19 safety concerns. Birthwise requests that preceptors respond to such a choice with understanding and acceptance. Students should not be penalized for this choice.

Communicating with Birthwise

If you have had close contact with someone who has had COVID, please contact the school within 24hours.

- Preceptors: If you have been exposed to COVID, have a pending COVID test, or have received a positive COVID test, please notify your Birthwise student as soon as possible. This information should not be withheld from your student for any reason.
- Students: If you have been exposed to COVID in preceptorship, or your preceptor has notified you that they have been exposed, have a pending test or have a received a positive COVID test, please report this to the Institutional Tracker (Katie Krebs) as soon as possible. We will work with you to determine next steps.

Information reported to the school will help us evaluate our recommendations and guidance, and make changes as needed to protect the safety of students, staff, faculty,

preceptors, clients and our communities. Use of information will follow applicable HIPAA and FERPA regulations.

Clinical Rotations

Each semester, the Clinical Director will reach out to possible Clinical Rotation sites to assess availability, and work with campus students to determine whether Clinical Rotations are safe and feasible for the semester. This will be announced around the time of registration so that students can prepare for the upcoming semester.

MAINTAINING AND SUPPORTING PERSONAL WELL-BEING

It is critical in this time of crisis to take care of our personal well-being. Here are some ways we can work together and individually to support ourselves and our Birthwise Community.

Birthwise Community Strengths

Despite the uncertainty presented by the global crisis and our inability to predict what will happen this fall, we have many strengths to draw on as a community. These include:

Dedicated Students, Staff, and Faculty

Staff and faculty are dedicated to creating the structure and systems necessary to keep all of us safe. We have been reading guidance, talking to public health officials, attending webinars, and meeting on zoom and (carefully) in person to determine how best to safely train compassionate and skilled midwives during this crisis.

Students are committed to supporting their classmates and pursuing their education to become the midwives their communities need.

We are all learning and growing. We are discovering new ways of doing things, exercising our creativity, and continuing to assess what our priorities and goals are so that we can continue our work as students, staff, and faculty with integrity.

Closed Cohorts

Unlike many institutions and other schools, cohorts take nearly all their classes together, which reduces total overall contacts and therefore potential exposures.

Located in a State with Low Numbers

COVID rates in Maine remain relatively low in comparison to the rest of the nation. Students who are traveling from out of state will follow Maine State Guidelines, which are in place to keep the numbers in Maine low.

Training Health Professionals

All our students are here to learn how to be safe, effective midwives. Part of our program includes how to keep your supplies clean, how to safely be in contact with

individuals without spreading disease, and how to do so compassionately and without judgement or shame. Of any group of students amid the pandemic right now, our Birthwise students are extremely well equipped to safely attend class while protecting the well-being of their classmates, instructors, and staff.

Our faculty are also all compassionate providers who have guided clients and students through challenges with grace and empathy. All our in-person faculty are invested in using their talents and skills to support and encourage our students and each other.

Mental Health

We must pay attention to our mental and emotional well-being through this pandemic, in addition to our physical health. Some members of our community are struggling with new or exacerbated mental health concerns. Stress levels are high. We are experiencing a collective grief around so much.

Get Help Now

If you are experiencing a mental health emergency, please call 911 for immediate help.

If you are experiencing mental health challenges and need support, here are some resources you can access:

- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#): 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish), or text TalkWithUs for English or Hablanos for Spanish to 66746. Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico can text Hablanos to 1-787-339-2663.
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or [Lifeline Crisis Chat](#).
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#): 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
- [National Child Abuse Hotline](#): 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#): 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or [Online Chat](#)
- [The Eldercare Locator](#) 1-800-677-1116 [TTY Instructions](#)
- [Veteran's Crisis Line](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or [Crisis Chat](#) or text: 8388255
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness- MAINE](#) (NAMI): 207-515-TEXT (8398)

Mental Health Hygiene

Just as we make choices about how to support and care for ourselves physically, we must also make choices about how to support and care for ourselves emotionally and mentally.

Social Media and News: Pay attention to how you feel when you use social media and read the news. Do these activities and the content you are accessing support or hinder your mental health? Consider changing the pages and people you follow or take a break from these media if you need to.

Group Dynamics: Pay attention to the emotions in the room. What energy do you bring to conversations with classmates, friends, clients and loved ones? What energy do others bring? Choose to help your community focus on strengths and healthy coping strategies, instead of contributing to panic. If classmates or community members fuel panic and stress, ask them to stop. If you see a member of your community struggling, help them access the resources above and get the help they need.

Sleep, Food, and Movement: Take time to nourish your body in the ways that work best for you. Prioritize good quality sleep, and make sure you get enough of it. Eat food that nourishes your body and makes you feel good. Move your body in ways that feel good, especially on days when you have lots of online class time.

- For more resources and tips, click [here](#)