



**MERIT
SCHOOL
OF MUSIC**

COVID-19 HANDBOOK

Revised November 20, 2020

Policies for Return to Building
Restore Illinois/Be Safe Chicago COVID-19 Recovery Plans
Faculty & Students

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General Policies

Group Classes & Private Lessons

1. Group classes and In-person private lessons are only available to students 8 years of age and older and will be responsible for walking to and from their lesson room without a faculty escort. Parents or other caregivers are NOT allowed to accompany their student into the building at this time, nor are siblings or other parties. (A parent/caregiver will be welcome to attend Early Childhood classes with their student.)
2. Students may not enter the building longer than 5 minutes prior to their class or private lesson and must leave promptly after. Students will not be allowed to linger in the building. The main entrance on 38 S. Peoria street (east entrance) will be the only entrance or exit utilized.
3. Whenever possible, observe 6 feet physical distancing, including during private lessons.
4. Anyone entering the building must submit to a screening, which will take place in the Community Room. Everyone in the building must wear a mask covering both nose and mouth at all times, including during your lesson if possible. Please plan to bring your own mask.
5. Students should use the bathroom prior to entering Merit's building. The bathrooms at Merit should be reserved for emergency use only whenever possible.
6. Improvements to the HVAC system in the Joy Faith Knapp Music Center now allow for more turnover of air from outside. This safety measure may cause the temperature in the building to be more variable, particularly if it is very hot or cold outside. Please plan to dress accordingly.
7. Commonly touched surfaces in classrooms will be disinfected between lessons. Please be flexible if your lesson may begin slightly late or end slightly early to accommodate this safety precaution.
8. The Library and Student Services office are not open or available to students and faculty attending in-person private lessons. Short term checkouts for instruments, books, or supplies will not be available the day of a lesson and must be arranged through the contactless pick-up and drop-off process, in advance, with the Librarian. If you need to contact either office, please reach out via e-mail at library@meritmusic.org or studentservices@meritmusic.org. No equipment or instruments should be shared except for pianos, timpani, marimba, and snare drums. These shared instruments will be sanitized between lessons. Percussion students should bring their own mallets, sticks, and beaters.
9. Faculty and staff not following safety protocols such as wearing a mask or unauthorized entrance into the building may result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension.
10. Students not following safety protocols such as wearing a mask or unauthorized entrance into the building may result in all lessons reverting to virtual until further notice.

11. If either student or faculty experience any symptoms related to COVID-19; including fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or has been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 lessons or classes will revert to a virtual format for two weeks at a minimum, and for as long as symptoms persist.
12. If either student or faculty have traveled out of state to a location that is experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak and is currently on the quarantine list provided by the State of Illinois, they will be expected to revert to a virtual format for two weeks. The updated list of states is available here:
<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home/emergency-travel-order.html>
13. If either student or faculty experience exposure to or diagnosis with COVID-19 within two weeks of having entered the building, they should report this to safety@meritmusic.org and their respective Program Director
 - a. Band Program Director: Andrew Zweibel – azweibel@meritmusic.org
 - b. Associate Dean & Piano Program Director: Amy Riske – ariske@meritmusic.org
 - c. Strings Program Director: Brian Beach – bbeach@meritmusic.org
 - d. Voice & Guitar Program Director: Melanie Lunardi – mlunardi@meritmusic.org
14. If Illinois or the City of Chicago moves backward to Phase 3 of the Restore Illinois/Be Safe Chicago plans, or there is other municipal guidance indicating that in-person lessons and classes are no longer safe or prudent, all activity will revert to virtual until such time that Illinois and/or the City of Chicago has resumed Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois/Be Safe Chicago plans.

Policies- Specific to Private Lessons

1. All students and faculty who wish to participate in in-person private lessons during this time must submit an application indicating their confirmed lesson schedule. Schedule changes must be reported one week in advance by the teacher and approved by the Private Lesson Coordinator or the respective Program Director. Last minute schedule changes will not be accommodated for in-person lessons, and any lessons where a late-notice schedule change is necessary will be taken virtually.
2. If a student's regular teacher has chosen to continue only teaching private lessons virtually, students may not request to transfer to a teacher/studio who will be teaching in-person simply because the student would prefer in-person private lessons. All teacher/studio change requests during the pandemic must follow Merit's prior policies and will be reviewed by the Private Lesson Coordinator and/or Program Director(s) before being approved.

3. Room assignments are subject to change. Faculty and students can check with the [Interim] Private Lesson Coordinator for the most up-to-date room assignments each day.

If you observe someone in the building not following the policies and procedures as outlined above, you can report this activity to safety@meritmusic.org.

Attendance Policies

IVM Attendance Policy

Merit's attendance policies for Instrumental & Vocal Music and Conservatory classes still stand.

Group Class Policy Addendum

Merit's original Group Class Attendance Policies as indicated above are still in effect during COVID-19 but will also include the following updates:

- Students who feel sick or show any symptoms related to COVID-19 should contact their Program Director or Manager and remain home. If make-up or virtual class options are available for the missed class, the family will be notified.
- Students who arrive at Merit's building to attend their in-person lesson but fail the health screening upon entry will be denied access to the building. If make-up or virtual class options are available for the missed class, the family will be notified.

Private Lesson Attendance Policy

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is expected of all students, and **there are no excused absences from private lessons**. **Students will be charged for all lessons for which they register, including those that are missed as a result of student absence.**

Private lesson teachers are not required to reschedule lessons due to student absence or tardiness; however, make-up lessons may be given at the teacher's discretion.

As a courtesy, any student who is unable to attend a scheduled lesson should notify their private lesson teacher directly as soon as possible. Following a student's second consecutive absence, the Private Lesson Coordinator will contact the family to discuss whether a commitment to private lessons is the best fit at that time.

Teacher Cancellations

If a teacher cancels a lesson or is late, they will make every effort to schedule a make-up lesson. If a teacher is not able to schedule a make-up lesson over the course of the session, the student's account will be credited for the missed lesson at the end of the session.

Private Lesson Attendance Policy Addendum

Merit's original Private Lesson Attendance Policies as indicated above are still in effect during COVID-19 but will also include the following updates:

- Students who were scheduled for an in-person lesson but arrive late or do not attend at all - for any reason - will be counted as unexcused absences. The

student's account will be billed for the lesson, and the time will not be rescheduled with the teacher.

- Students who have an in-person lesson scheduled should alert their teacher as *soon as possible* if the student needs to change that week's lesson to a virtual meeting. Last-minute requests to move to a virtual lesson will be honored only at the teacher's discretion and availability and may be counted as an unexcused on the student's account.
- Students who arrive at Merit's building to attend their in-person lesson but fail the health screening upon entry will be denied access to the building. The missed lesson will be counted as an unexcused lesson.

Metrics for Determining Safety of In-Person Instruction

Merit will continue to operate in-person classes based on the data provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health "Metrics for School Determination of Community Spread" which are available on [this website](#). All four metrics tracked via this website (Test Positivity, New Cases Per 100,000, New Cases, and Youth Case Increase) must be labeled as "Moderate" or better for two consecutive weeks for *both* Cook County and the city of Chicago for in-person classes to meet at Merit. Should any 1 metric increase to the "Substantial" rating, all in-person activity will shift to virtual instruction until both Cook County and the City of Chicago once again reach 2 consecutive weeks "Moderate" (or better) ratings.

IVM & EC Exposure & Quarantine Guidelines

If a student (or any member of a student's household) tests positive and contact tracing determines that the student was present in Merit's building while contagious, Merit will notify that everyone in that student's class that quarantine is recommended and the class will meet virtually for the following 2 weeks. Notification will be sent to all other students who were in the building the same day as the infected student, however classes and lessons where the infected student was not present will continue to meet in-person. Any student who is uncomfortable attending in-person classes will be welcome to join the live class via Zoom for the following two weeks. (See the "COVID-19 Exposure Plan" section of this document for further information.)

Conservatory Exposure & Quarantine Guidelines

If a Conservatory student reports that they (or any member of their household) have tested positive and attended in-person Conservatory classes while contagious, the entire Conservatory cohort will receive notification and quarantine recommendations. Cohorts are regularly scheduled to attend in-person classes every four weeks which is double the 2-week quarantine recommendation, so in-person class schedules should not be affected. (See the "COVID-19 Exposure Plan" section of this document for further information.)

Private Lesson Exposure & Quarantine Guidelines

If a student reports that they (or any member of their household) have tested positive and attended a private lesson in Merit's building while contagious, Merit will notify everyone in that teacher's studio who attended a lesson the same day and recommend a 2-week quarantine. All private lessons in that teacher's studio will be held virtually for 2 weeks. Notification will be sent to all other students who were in the building the same day as the infected student, however classes and lessons where the

infected student was not present will continue to meet in-person. (See the "COVID-19 Exposure Plan" section of this document for further information.)

COVID-19 Exposure Plan

1. COVID-19 Exposure Reporting
 - a. Students, faculty, and staff should report diagnosis with COVID-19 to their respective Program Director or supervisor and to hr@meritmusic.org as soon as possible if they are diagnosed within two weeks of having visited the building.
 - b. Program Directors will notify Department Heads and Emergency Communications Team and convene an emergency session
 - c. Program Directors will review the building schedule and determine a list of which students, faculty and staff were in the building at the same time as the individual with COVID-19.
2. Communication of Reporting
 - a. Emergency Communications Team will send a general email to student body and faculty for transparency and disclosure and a targeted message to the list of exposed individuals compiled by the Program Director.
3. Building Sanitation per CDC Recommendations after Reporting
 - a. If it has been fewer than 7 days since the sick employee has been in the facility, close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:
 - i. Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
 - ii. During this waiting period, open outside doors and turn on HVAC blowers to increase air circulation in these areas.
 - iii. Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them.
 - iv. To disinfect surfaces, use [products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
 - v. Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting.
 - vi. You may need to wear additional PPE depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using. For each product you use, consult and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
 - b. If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.

Reverting to Virtual-Only Programming (Organization-Wide)

1. Once the decision is made by the Department Heads, the Emergency Communications Team convenes and sends out notices to all necessary

constituencies that in-person private lessons and classes will no longer be available.

2. Lessons and classes continue on a virtual basis until such time that the Department Heads determine; then students may be phased back in to in-person instruction.
3. NOTE: The decision to close the entire facility for an extended period of time versus one particular room/area will be made on a case-by-case basis and dependent upon risk assessment.