What are FLETC’s guidelines related to COVID-19 testing?

FLETC’s protocols for placing students in quarantine or isolation status are in line with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance as well as advice from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) medical officials. FLETC isolates students who test positive for COVID-19 and quarantines those identified through contact tracing to have been in close contact with them. FLETC’s testing capability can lessen the time necessary for quarantine. FLETC has established these protocols in consultation with DHS medical professionals due to the close contact nature of the residential training environment, which is notably different from many schools and colleges across the country. Not only do all students reside on-Center in close proximity to one another in dormitory facilities, but they share every meal indoors in a cafeteria and engage in training exercises that require close physical contact.

FLETC began planning for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic as early as February 2020. Since that time, FLETC has worked closely with its Office of Chief Counsel to ensure it respects students’ constitutional freedoms while protecting them from viral community spread to the extent practicable. Students are always free to leave the FLETC grounds but are subject to FLETC’s established policies for readmittance. During the recent temporary suspension of training, students were able to go outside, do laundry, and engage in other activities while following established protocols for wearing face coverings and practicing social distancing. Additionally, FLETC and its service contractors went to great lengths to modify processes quickly to ensure safe and timely meal delivery, as well as other necessary services.
1. WHAT ARE FLETC’S GUIDELINES WITH INCOMING STUDENTS RELATED TO COVID-19 TESTING?

FLETC has implemented a multi-layered process to mitigate introduction of infection into the FLETC community from incoming students. As part of the registration process, FLETC asks students COVID-19 screening questions 30 days and 14 days before arrival. All incoming residential students enter into a 10-day Restriction of Movement (ROM) period before they begin training. FLETC partnered with DHS Headquarters and the U.S. military to acquire the capability to conduct COVID-19 testing. FLETC learns the results within 48 hours of receipt of tests at the laboratory. FLETC tests students on Days 1 and 5 of the ROM period.

2. WHAT ARE FLETC’S GUIDELINES FOR ALL STAFF RELATED TO COVID-19 TESTING?

FLETC makes testing available on a bi-weekly basis for staff who have close physical contact with students, as well as for staff who have daily prolonged interaction with students.

3. WHAT GUIDELINES ARE USED TO IDENTIFY COVID-19 POSITIVE CASES AND WHAT ARE THE MITIGATION PROCEDURES?

**Identifying COVID-19 Positive Cases**

In addition to pre-screening students and testing students and identified staff, FLETC has implemented numerous measures to identify positive cases of COVID-19. FLETC communicates through its Participating Organizations and directly to its students and staff the need to report any symptoms of COVID-19. In addition, FLETC takes all students’ temperatures before they are permitted to pass through the front gates of FLETC. Additionally, instructors include a general wellness brief during pre-class safety briefs, and monitor students for visible COVID-19 symptoms. FLETC also instructs students to take their temperatures at a walk-through kiosk system at exits to all cafeterias and student centers. Additionally, all people coming through FLETC’s front gates answer COVID-19 screening questions and must submit to no-touch infrared thermometer temperature checks.

**Mitigation Procedures**

Beginning in February 2020, and continuing in March, FLETC implemented numerous COVID-19 mitigation measures. In the early days of the pandemic, FLETC posted COVID-19 advisories throughout its training delivery points; implemented enhanced screening procedures for students; suspended guest attendance at graduations; eliminated the use of off-Center student lodging; suspended visitors and guests on-Center; and limited
staff and student interaction by restricting the use of dining facilities, indoor gym facilities, and student centers to students only. Beginning in April 2020, FLETC began using no-touch medical grade infrared forehead thermometers to take the temperatures of everyone attempting to pass through FLETC entrance gates at all four training delivery points. Additionally, FLETC’s contract security force began asking COVID-19 screening questions to all seeking access to a FLETC facility.

Following a three-month suspension of training that began on March 20, 2020, FLETC resumed training with new mitigation protocols in place. All students arriving at FLETC for in-residence training are required to go through a 10-day Restriction of Movement (ROM) period, during which they are separated from the general student population before beginning training. FLETC administers COVID-19 testing for students on Days 1 and 5 of the ROM period and offers voluntary testing for staff who have close contact or prolonged interaction with students. FLETC installed exposure-reduction Plexiglas barriers at customer service areas throughout its training sites, modified layouts and incorporated floor markings in cafeterias to accommodate social distancing, and reduced rider capacities on FLETC buses. Since training resumed, FLETC has only used single-occupancy dormitories and set aside isolation dormitories for students demonstrating symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19. Additionally, FLETC has actively taken steps to enforce the use of face coverings for all staff and students through messaging, policy, and ongoing reminders to staff and students. FLETC’s support services contractors have implemented Emergency Operation Plans that mandate the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) by their staff members.

4 IN THE EVENT OF AN OUTBREAK, WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES USED TO MITIGATE AND CONTAIN A COVID-19 OUTBREAK?

When a student in training presents to the Health Unit with symptoms of COVID-19, he or she is tested as soon as possible. If the student is found to be positive, due to the close contact nature of in-residence training, the class may be moved to an isolation dormitory until FLETC deems it safe for them to resume training in consultation with CDC guidelines, advice from DHS medical professionals, and the results of contact tracing. This protocol is especially critical when more than one student presents with COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive, which may indicate wider spread of the virus. In addition, FLETC conducts COVID-19 tests on all students in class with the COVID-19 positive individual, which may result in the class resuming training earlier than if testing were not available.

FLETC immediately begins contact tracing to identify others who were potentially exposed. FLETC has response personnel assigned to each training site who have completed a certification course from the Johns Hopkins University to serve as contact tracers. FLETC has established specific procedures for contact tracing that are consistent with CDC guidelines and have been vetted through DHS medical officers. The process begins with a detailed interview of the positive case to develop an exposure timeline, and an analysis of training schedules and other work schedule documents. FLETC contact tracers then follow DHS guidelines to identify anyone who is at risk of exposure. FLETC notifies these individuals’ managers and sends a follow-up email to each exposed individual with instructions on their responsibilities to maintain social distance, wear a face covering, and take other precautionary measures. FLETC also works closely with local healthcare and emergency management officials and hospitals at all training delivery points to share information regarding positive cases.
IN THE EVENT OF ONE OR MORE MEMBERS OF A CLASS TESTING POSITIVE FOR COVID-19, WHAT RESTRICTIONS WILL BE PLACED ON STUDENTS WHO TEST NEGATIVE?

FLETC will continue to follow its protocols for isolating, testing, and containing the spread of COVID-19. This effort includes leveraging CDC guidance and advice from DHS medical officials to make an appropriate determination regarding when it is safe to return to training.