



ABHES BULLETIN

To: ABHES-Accredited Institutions and Programs
Interested Parties

From: India Y. Tips, Executive Director

Date: March 10, 2020

Subject: Coronavirus Update

ABHES continues to monitor and assess the circumstances and potential impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). As expected, we have already begun to receive questions about the status of upcoming events, including the next accreditation workshop, various committee meetings, and impending accreditation visits. Please know that the Commission's primary concern is the safety and wellbeing of its stakeholders with specific focus on staff, institutions, and students.

ABHES is aware that several states have declared a state of emergency, which is typically confirmed in a time of unusual and extreme adversity in an effort to obtain and access additional governmental resources and aid beyond what is normally available. Until further notice, ABHES is operating as normal, but we are in the process of exploring remote attendance options for those unable to or simply uneasy about travel and attending events in person. At this time, all events will be held as previously planned and scheduled, including on-site evaluation visits. Please remain in close contact with assigned ABHES staff members and communicate promptly any changes in your plans to attend and participate in such events. For those institutions and programs to undergo visits, please promptly notify ABHES staff immediately about any changes that might impact the evaluation or the health and safety of the visiting team.

The U.S. Department of Education released [guidance for institutions](#) to address compliance with Title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) policies for students receiving federal financial aid whose activities have been affected by COVID-19. Institutions should review this guidance for all activities that are subject to Title IV policies and regulations. The Department is providing some short-term flexibility for schools to help students complete the term for which the students are currently enrolled.

Institutions may wish to note that flexibility does not generally extend to students who have not yet enrolled or whose term has not yet begun. The Department acknowledges that it will continue to monitor the situation and may provide additional guidance as deemed necessary. The Department will provide updates on the [Department's Coronavirus webpage](#).

This serves as a reminder that ABHES-accredited institutions are required to have a written emergency preparedness plan that is available to all students and staff. These plans should outline academic continuity processes and procedures. Many institutions have inquired about ABHES approvals of new or expanded distance education or clinical simulations as many external clinical sites are no longer allowing student participation. The Commission understands that institutions may need to make changes to how training is being offered and is open to working to find appropriate and flexible solutions. While the current conditions

present a unique opportunity to consider expanding delivery of online instruction or implementation of clinical simulations as part of a continuity discussion, these conditions are not ideal for the development of quality online or simulation learning experiences. Online learning requires intentional instructional design as well as an exploration of the learning modality and pedagogy that must be aligned to a larger institutional strategy with intentionality, and collaboratively operationalized by various stakeholder groups within and across organizations. ABHES standards also do not typically allow for simulation in most fields, but again, the Commission will remain flexible and consider options on a case by case basis for now. For consideration of specific instances beyond that which is outlined by the U.S. Department of Education, contact the ABHES staff to discuss proposals prior to implementation. The Commission also recognizes that any guidance provided now may change with new developments in the coming days, weeks and/or months depending on the virus' impact on public health.

ABHES will continue to rely upon the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Education for information and updates. Other resources include:

- <https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- <https://www.who.int/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/index.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/sick-with-2019-nCoV-fact-sheet.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>