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Returning to On-Campus Visits After COVID-19

Due to the necessity for continuing quality assurance activities during the period of restrictions on travel and gatherings associated with COVID-19, CEPH began conducting virtual site visits in June 2020. See CEPH's [Virtual Site Visit Policy and Disclosure Statement – COVID-19, revised October 22, 2020](#).

As campuses reopen for place-based activities and restrictions on travel and gatherings are lifted, CEPH will resume its pre-pandemic operations, including resuming on-campus site visits for accreditation reviews. The US Department of Education's guidance, which allowed the conduct of virtual site visits, only allows accreditors the flexibility to accommodate situations in which on-campus visits are not safe or feasible. **Therefore, CEPH must return to on-campus visits when safety and feasibility conditions are met.**

This document outlines the conditions and requirements associated with site visits throughout the 2021-2022 academic year.

Decisions on visit format

CEPH will define the format (on-campus or virtual) for each scheduled site visit no later than three months before the visit's first day. If CEPH and the unit cannot verify that an on-campus visit is safe and feasible by three months before the visit's first day, a virtual visit will be conducted in accordance with CEPH policy.

Note that, per federal regulations, all virtual visits must be supplemented by an on-campus follow-up visit as soon as it is safe to do so. Therefore, units that cannot host visitors on campus during their scheduled visit dates will undertake two visits, the virtual site visit and the in-person follow-up visit. See CEPH's [Virtual Site Visit Policy](#) and [Information on Planning Follow-up Visits](#) for additional information

Safety

In addition to considering guidance from governmental agencies on air and ground travel, the following considerations apply:

- All CEPH staff and site visit team members must be vaccinated against COVID-19, with at least two weeks since the final vaccine dose, by the visit's first day.
- Only site visitors and CEPH staff who feel comfortable with all aspects of conducting on-campus visits, as specified in this document, will participate.
- CEPH will follow current CDC guidance on masking; if current CDC guidance does not require mask wearing at a given location/time, site visitors may choose whether to wear masks during the visit based on comfort

level and mutual agreement with the participants in each meeting. If university rules require masking or if the unit is aware of special considerations in advance of the visit, communicate this to the CEPH coordinator.

- If possible, the unit should arrange for meetings to occur in a well-ventilated space and/or in a larger room that allows for some empty chairs or spacing between attendees.

Feasibility

CEPH's extensive experience with site visits before and during the COVID-19 crisis indicates that "hybrid" meetings, in which some attendees participate via phone or computer and other participants gather in a meeting room, are less productive and conducive to information gathering than meetings that are either fully virtual or fully place-based. **Therefore, all site visit sessions will occur either with all participants attending in person or all participants participating via Zoom.**

CEPH's experience conducting virtual site visits has indicated that fully virtual meetings may encourage greater participation and attendance from students, alumni, internship supervisors, and other stakeholders who are not university faculty or staff.

Completing student and external stakeholder meetings via Zoom will also reduce the time that the team needs to spend in a meeting room on campus, reducing potential exposures and logistical burdens. CEPH has adjusted the standard agenda to reduce the team's time on campus and allow time for the site visit team to move from campus to the hotel prior to the three Zoom meetings. **These changes result in a 2-day visit schedule (with team arrival on the night before the visit begins), rather than a 3-day schedule, for SPH¹. Programs (PHP and SBP) retain their typical 2-day schedule, with team arrival the night before the visit's first day.**

Agenda templates are available for [PHP](#), [SPH](#), and [SBP](#).

The following principles apply:

- Consistent with CEPH's pre-pandemic practices, all faculty and staff who are scheduled to participate in the visit must attend in person.
- Three of the scheduled meetings during the site visit will occur via Zoom. These meetings include those indicated on the agenda as dedicated to 1) students, 2) alumni, practice supervisors, and community partners, and 3) university leaders.
- For the Zoom meetings, site visitors will participate from their hotel rooms or a hotel meeting/conference space, not from campus.

¹ SPH visits currently scheduled for Monday through Wednesday will take place on Monday & Tuesday (team arrival on Sunday). SPH visits currently scheduled for Wednesday through Friday will take place on Thursday & Friday (team arrival on Wednesday). Team members will likely require a hotel stay on the final visit day, depending on flight availability, in order to accommodate a full day of meetings.