



March 12, 2020

Dear NOLS Community,

NOLS has been monitoring and actively responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, in close consultation with federal and state public health experts, peer organizations, and our educational partners since January.

On March 10, NOLS implemented a schoolwide response to better coordinate efforts to safeguard the health of our students, faculty, and staff. We have taken the following steps in support of the national effort to slow the spread of COVID-19 and to reduce risk of significant impacts to our students and staff.

- On March 12, we made the decision to suspend all classroom-based NOLS student programs. This includes Wilderness Medicine, Risk Services and Custom Education courses that start between Saturday, March 14 and Friday, April 23. Our hope is to resume instruction again on April 24 and we will make that decision as the situation evolves. Classroom courses that are in progress will be completed. NOLS will communicate directly with students and sponsors impacted by these cancellations with information on next steps.
- As of March 12, we are cancelling field-based international courses that start between now and April 23. We based our decision on the [U.S. Department of State](#) raising the worldwide travel advisory to Level 3 (Reconsider Travel) and heightened concerns among our students and staff about disruptions during international travel. For students impacted by these cancellations, your Admissions Officer will be reaching out to provide support.
- International courses that are currently in the field will continue as scheduled. The school has implemented a daily check-in with these courses to keep them informed in the event that new travel restrictions are announced.
- As of now, we plan to operate U.S. field-based expedition courses as scheduled in March and April. Our field-based courses have smaller group sizes, occur in outdoor locations away from population centers, and involve little social interaction with the larger community. Staff will continue to monitor health and travel guidelines closely, and are poised to make judgement calls as they become necessary.
- We are working through our business disruption plan should NOLS Headquarters or one of our program locations be seriously constrained by illness so that the school can continue supporting



essential functions. The school values the commitment and expertise that our instructional staff bring to the fulfillment of our mission, and we are making provisions to support faculty impacted by cancelled courses.

- Within our places of work, we are seeking to limit the potential of transmitting COVID-19 and influenza by re-emphasizing hygiene practices and following CDC guidance and local directives. We are encouraging employees to stay home if showing flu-like symptoms and formulating an emergency sick-leave policy to support staff. We continue to encourage staff to follow CDC recommended hygiene practices:
  - Wash your hands often
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick
  - Cover coughs and sneezes with elbow

Schoolwide decisions require time, effort, and patience. We are in wholly new territory and will learn as we go, together. As we move forward, we are committed to upholding the standards of excellence in instruction, leadership, and risk management that distinguish NOLS as both a school and a community.

We stand ready to support students, faculty, and staff in this period of uncertainty and change. I am deeply grateful to your focused and resourceful partnership. We ask our community to check the [NOLS Travel Notices webpage](#) for current information.

NOLS is a resilient community. Of all the groups in the world to navigate this episode with, I am grateful that I am doing it with our students, staff, and supporters. I am confident we will be challenged, and that we will rise to the occasion in the coming days and weeks. Thanks to each of you for your passion, understanding and commitment to this shared effort.

Best regards,

Terri Watson  
President