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A Message from Our Executive Director

There is no blueprint for how to navigate this uncertain time. Penland will continue to face difficult decisions about how we can operate safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please be assured that we are doing our best, that we are prioritizing both the safety of our community and the future of Penland, and that we will make the most informed, carefully considered decisions that we can.

All decisions about how to operate at Penland during the pandemic are made by me, in close consultation with the rest of Penland's administration, with our local health department, and with our Pandemic Response Team, which is a select group of employees from across all areas of our staff. We will follow all relevant guidelines from the CDC and the state of North Carolina and we will continue to make decisions based on key metrics of the pandemic in our region.

We acknowledge that, for the duration of the pandemic, any activity other than total self-quarantine will carry a degree of risk. However, we love and believe in facilitating in-person experiences. Part of our job during this time is to establish and maintain a standard of manageable risk. That is what the following document is for. Thank you for placing your trust in us to do this wisely. In turn, we will rely on you to follow all of these guidelines carefully and responsibly. By prioritizing each other's safety we can get back to what we love at Penland—the work, discovery, and fellowship that nourishes so many of us.

All the best,

Mia Hall

FUNDAMENTAL PRECAUTIONS

Overview

To protect our staff, guests, and the surrounding community during the pandemic, we have made changes to our policies, procedures, and physical structures at Penland. If you have spent time on campus before, you may be used to certain routines that have had to change or spaces that now have restricted access. Please pay extra attention to the signage posted throughout campus and respect all guidelines designed to keep you and others safe while at Penland.

These guidelines represent an agreement between you and the school. Penland agrees to direct resources to maintain systems of health and safety, and you agree to adjust your life here in accordance with those systems. Anyone who intentionally or repeatedly violates these guidelines will not be allowed to stay on campus.

Face Coverings

Everyone on Penland's campus must wear an appropriate face covering except when inside a private residence, when eating or drinking, or when outside and at least 6 feet from anyone who is not a member of your household. Appropriate face coverings need to meet current [CDC recommendations](#). Whether commercial or homemade, a mask should consist of two or more layers, cover the nose and mouth completely, and secure under the chin. Gaiters and face shields do not meet the current standards. Everyone is responsible for providing their own face coverings.

Anyone who is unwilling to meet the requirements of this policy should not plan to come to Penland. The only exceptions to the face covering policy are children under the age of two and people who have documented medical conditions that make wearing a mask unsafe.

Social Distancing

The CDC identifies social distancing, or limiting close, face-to-face contact with other people, as the best way to stop the spread of the coronavirus. A minimum of 6 feet should be maintained between you and any other person outside of your household at all times while at Penland. We also know, from emerging science about airborne transmission, that 6 feet is not a magic number—the larger the distance the safer you are. Additionally, social distancing should be practiced in combination with other precautions like wearing masks, frequent handwashing, and being outdoors or in well-ventilated areas whenever possible.

Handwashing and Sanitization

Hand hygiene is a fundamental precaution during this pandemic. Handwashing instructions are posted at most public sinks on campus. There are also no-touch hand sanitizer dispensers at the entrance to each studio. Our housekeeping staff has increased cleaning frequency across campus in all common areas and on high-touch surfaces and everyone on campus is expected to help to keep campus sanitized by disinfecting surfaces and objects with provided supplies after touching them.

Health Screening

Before coming to the Penland campus, all individuals should self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms. If you have a cough, a fever (greater than 100.4°F), or are experiencing [any other symptoms](#) associated with COVID-19, please stay home. It is not safe to come to Penland until at least 10 days after the onset of symptoms if you have a confirmed case of COVID-19 or 14 days after possible exposure for a suspected case. Additionally, you must be free from all symptoms for at least 24 hours, including being fever free without fever-reducing medication.

During your stay on campus you will be asked to do this same self-screening on a daily basis. A self-screening checklist will be provided to you to facilitate this daily safety check. If at any time you are experiencing any symptoms or have any reason to believe you may have been exposed to the coronavirus, please isolate safely and call the Penland Emergency Number (828-358-4586), which is posted in all buildings on campus. All Penland staff are following these same self-screening guidelines.

CAMPUS SAFETY DETAILS

Arrival

To reduce contact between staff and participants, housing assignments and a campus map will be emailed to participants before their arrival. All housing will be available on the Sunday before your rental week. We always recommend that people arrive before dark.

Incoming renters must travel to Penland via car—to help mitigate health risks no one is allowed to travel here by plane or other mass transit at this time. Campus is closed to all visitors. If you have a guest bringing you to campus, they must remain in the vehicle at all times. If you experience issues on your way to campus or after your arrival, please use the Penland Emergency Number (828-358-4586) to contact our on-call staff member.

Studio Safety

All renters will attend a studio orientation at 9:00 a.m. on Monday at the beginning of their first rental week. Studio staff will help you identify individual work areas and orient you to our basic safety practices as well as our new protocols for health and safety during the pandemic. All studio users must commit to our cornerstone mitigation practices of masks, social distancing, and hand hygiene while working in the studio, as well as participating in daily communal cleaning and sanitization of frequently touched surfaces, shared workspaces, and shared equipment.

Maximum occupancy of rooms and work areas has been established, and is indicated with floor markings and other clear signage. There will be no more than five renters working at any time in each studio. Some equipment and furniture has been moved or removed to allow for more comfortable, distanced work. The studios are equipped with touch-free hand sanitizer stations, handwashing sinks, and sanitizing sprays and wipes near high-touch surfaces and communal tools. Ventilation systems are in more frequent use and modifications have been made to maximize air flow.

There will be a studio use log at the entrance to each studio that users will need to fill out when entering or leaving the studio to assist in contact tracing in the event of an infection. There are also cleaning and sanitization logs located in each studio to help coordinate the shared, daily cleaning responsibilities.

Studio renters will need to provide their own Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that they might need for their studio work, including eye, ear, and respiratory protection. All PPE must be labeled and stored at assigned workstations or private housing, and away from others' PPE. You will also need to cover the exhale valves of any respiratory protection while using it indoors or near others.

Housing and Housekeeping

Guest accommodations will be cleaned according to [CDC guidelines](#), which we are closely monitoring to make sure that we meet or exceed them. All renters will receive a single room with a private bathroom. Only participants attending with a partner or collaborator will have the option to select a double room with a private bath. All rooms will be cleaned and unoccupied for at least one week between occupants.

Linens will be provided, but renters are encouraged to bring their own pillows. Routine cleaning of housing will be limited to common spaces, but fresh linens, pillows, and room cleaning will be available by request. You can simply send a request to guestservices@penland.org. Fresh linens will be delivered to your housing in a plastic bag and left outside your door. Dirty linens should be placed back into the bag and placed back in the hallway for collection. If you are staying for one week, the expectation is that you will not need housekeeping services.

For those staying for more than one week, laundry facilities will be available upon request. You will need to provide your own laundry detergent.

Kitchens

You will be assigned a kitchen, which you will share with the other people renting your studio. Participants must create a schedule that will allow only one person at a time in the kitchen area. You will be put in touch with the other renters sharing your kitchen and provided a blank schedule to assist in reserving time. Please keep the schedule visible. Penland's housekeeping staff will routinely sanitize shared kitchens and will rely on the schedule to know when it is safe to do so.

Masks must be worn in all common areas, including kitchens, but may be removed when eating or drinking. Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, or eating utensils. You may bring your own or claim items from your kitchen for the duration of your rental and keep them in your room when not in use.

Disposable tableware will be available if necessary. Non-disposable food service items like pots and pans should be washed with soap and hot water and handled carefully with clean or gloved hands.

Participants will be responsible for cleaning the kitchen after each use and are responsible for removing all of their items from the refrigerator and kitchen area before their departure.

Renters will be grouped into “pods,” so your studio will determine your housing and kitchen assignment. For this reason we are unable to accommodate requests for specific housing or kitchens.

Main Office, Supply Store, and Gallery

The main office is closed to foot traffic; however, the main office staff is still a resource for you. They can answer questions or assist you with making copies and shipping through USPS from the doorway, where there will also be a transparent, protective barrier.

The Supply Store will not have regular open hours during this rental period, but you will be able to schedule assistance from the store staff with shipping through UPS and FedEx.

The Penland Gallery & Visitors Center is currently open by appointment only on Fridays and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Appointments can be made in 1-hour slots. Call 828-765-6211 or email gallery@penland.org to make an appointment.

Coffee House

The Penland Coffee House has, for the time being, discontinued our dine-in options but is still offering drinks, baked goods, and a limited assortment of soups and sandwiches available for take-out. All food items are prepared by Serv-Safe certified employees and all kitchen and coffee house employees have been trained and certified in the current training program offered by the state of North Carolina, “Count On Me NC,” teaching the most up-to-date food service practices during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Coffee House will be open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. and is open only to renters as well as Penland staff, core fellows, and resident artists. The Pines Dining Hall will not be open during the rental period.

COVID RESPONSE

Potential Cases

If, at any time during your rental period, you notice any of the [symptoms associated with COVID-19](#), or have any other reason to suspect that you may be infected, please isolate safely and call the Penland Emergency Number at (828-358-4586). You will either need to end your rental and leave campus or

remain in isolation until you can produce a negative test result. We have isolated housing designated for people needing to quarantine.

Penland staff can help you coordinate collecting your belongings for departure or arrange a COVID-19 test at one of the nearby testing facilities. You can also make temporary arrangements with staff to purchase food that will be delivered to you while you await testing.

Penland staff will use interviews and studio sign-in information to perform contact tracing and determine the level of risk to other renters or community members. We will not disclose the names of people with suspected infections, but we will communicate directly with close contacts about necessary precautions that may need to be taken. We will communicate with all renters and staff if the circumstances present a safety concern for the community as a whole and we will contact and follow all guidance of local health authorities.

If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or if Penland staff determines that your risk of exposure to an infected person was significant, you will be required to produce a negative test result or else end your rental and leave campus. A prorated refund would be offered in accordance with our updated refund policy.

Testing

Penland staff can help you schedule a COVID-19 test and arrange transportation to local testing facilities. There are currently rapid antigen tests available through a network of local clinics, and molecular tests available through our local health department.

Antigen tests are available to anyone, free of charge, with or without symptoms or suspected contact with the virus. The tests are drive-thru, available four days a week, and the results are available within 1 hour. To schedule a test you can contact the Mountain Community Health Partnership at (828) 688-2104.

Molecular tests are available in our area—through insurance or direct payment—to anyone who is symptomatic or has reason to believe they have been in close contact with the virus. Testing is available seven days a week and results are currently available within 2–3 days. To schedule a test you can contact the Toe River Health District at (828) 765-2239.

Transportation

Our local public transportation service is able to transport sick or potentially sick people from Penland to a testing facility or to the hospital. You can contact Mitchell County Transit at (828) 688-4715 to arrange transportation, or a Penland staff member can help you make the arrangements. Be sure to let them know that the passenger is potentially infected with COVID-19.

Confirmed Cases

If someone on campus tests positive for COVID-19, Penland will move quickly to notify public health authorities, contain and sterilize possibly contaminated areas, and communicate with everyone on campus. The local health department would lead contact tracing efforts.

Anyone who tests positive during their rental period must end their rental and return home. All participants in the studio rental program must have a plan to return home in case they get sick, including identifying a person who can pick them up if necessary. A prorated refund will be offered in accordance with our updated refund policy. If a participant is unable to go home, they will be financially responsible for their prolonged stay in housing and for food and any other accommodations that need to be made.

Staff Contact

If, at any time during your stay on Penland's campus, you feel you may be sick or have any reason to suspect that there is a health and safety issue on campus that needs urgent attention, please call the Penland Emergency Number at (828) 358-4586.

If you have any questions about Penland's COVID-19 safety guidelines or emergency procedures, please contact Penland's director of operations, Ian Henderson, at operationsdir@penland.org or (828) 467-9389.