

Quarantine ordered for 2,500 students at elite Swiss school

September 23 2020, by Nadine Achoui-Lesage and Jamey Keaten



The hospitality management school 'Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne' pictured in Lausanne, Switzerland, Wednesday, 23 September 2020. Swiss health authorities have ordered a quarantine for 2,500 students at a hospitality management school after a 'significant outbreaks' of COVID-19 turned up. (Jean-Christophe Bott/Keystone via AP)

Swiss health authorities have ordered a quarantine for a staggering 2,500 students at a prestigious hospitality management school in the city of Lausanne after "significant outbreaks" of the coronavirus that are a suspected byproduct of off-campus partying.

Authorities in Switzerland's Vaud canton, or region, said all undergraduates at the Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne, known as the Lausanne Hospitality Management University in English, have been ordered to quarantine both on- and off-campus because the number of COVID-19 outbreaks because targeted closures were not possible.

The World Health Organization, national health authorities and others have cautioned that young people, who tend to have milder COVID-19 symptoms than older demographic groups, have been a key driver for the continued spread of the coronavirus in recent weeks, particularly in Europe.

"Significant outbreaks of infection have appeared at several levels of training, making a more targeted closure impossible that that involving the 2,500 students affected," the Vaud regional office said in a statement. "Until Sept. 28, the students must stay home. For some, that means not leaving their housing on the hospitality school site."

It noted that an early investigation showed that "one or more parties was at the origin of these many outbreaks of infection," and reiterated authorities previous call for a "responsible attitude" among party-goers such as by wearing masks, tracing their contacts, keeping alert for symptoms, and "social distancing."

School administrators were taking "all necessary measures" to ensure that classes were continuing online, the statement said.



The hospitality management school 'Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne' pictured in Lausanne, Switzerland, Wednesday, 23 September 2020. Swiss health authorities have ordered a quarantine for 2,500 students at a hospitality management school after a 'significant outbreaks' of COVID-19 turned up. (Jean-Christophe Bott/Keystone via AP)

University spokesman Sherif Mamdouh said Thursday that the situation was "not ideal" but that the university took precautions in recent months. He said that 11 students had tested positive for the coronavirus and none required hospitalization.

Mamdouh said the quarantine affects 2,500 undergraduates. The university has a total student body of about 3,500, including people pursuing advanced degrees. He said hundreds of students living in on-

campus dormitories on campus will be subject to the quarantine.

Switzerland is not alone. The latest government figures in neighboring France show that 22% of the country's currently active virus clusters emerged at schools are universities. The United States has also seen clusters linked to college students.

World Health Organization spokeswoman Margaret Harris said that while it is "unfair to just put it on the young people," it's also unsurprising that teenagers and young adults might assume they don't need to worry about succumbing to the virus.

"Perceptions do indicate that they don't feel they are as at-risk as older groups" Harris said, particularly in the wake of data showing younger people typically have less-severe cases of COVID-19.

"The message they have heard is: 'You are out of jail, go out and play,'" she said. "We don't want to be the fun police, but we want people to have fun safely."

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