

FAQ - University Employees and COVID-19

March 18, 2020

Is the University going to close?

- At this time, the University has no intention of closing; however, certain functions may be limited or temporarily halted.
- The University does not have any current plans to lay off or furlough employees.
- If a function or University office is closed, employees working in those units will receive additional information specific to their unit regarding continued work. Nevertheless, employees will remain in their active status and continue on their regular payroll for the foreseeable future.
- Recognizing that the situation is constantly evolving, the University will continue to evaluate essential operations and provide updates to employees.
- The University anticipates that we will continue most operations.

What if I am in a high-risk group?

- The CDC defines the following as being at high-risk for contracting COVID-19: elderly, those with serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or lung disease.
- You should contact Human Resources who will help to assess if you can work from home or need other accommodations.

Can I be sent home if I appear to be ill?

- Yes. To prevent potential exposure of others, you may be asked to go home if you are showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- The decision is to be made on a case-by-case basis.

What should I do if I feel sick?

- In general if you do not feel well enough to work, you should stay home from work and follow normal University practices regarding your absence.
- If you feel sick with symptoms that could be COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing), you should stay home from work, avoid contact with others, not travel, seek health advice from your healthcare provider, and notify your supervisor.
- For additional information you may also contact the Tennessee Coronavirus Hotline at 877.857.2945 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Central. Call volume may be high.

What should I do if a member of my household has been sick or I have had close contact with someone who has been sick with COVID-19 symptoms?

- You should stay home from work, avoid contact with others, not travel, seek health advice from your healthcare provider, and notify your supervisor.
- If your healthcare provider recommends quarantine or isolation, contact Human Resources.

What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

- While both isolation and quarantine refer to methods of preventing the spread of illness, they do not mean the same thing.
 - **Isolation** refers to separating people who are sick from those who are not sick.

- **Quarantine** refers to separating people who are, or may have been, exposed to a pathogen, but are not showing signs of illness. Quarantine is used to make sure individuals are not contagious by minimizing contact with people who were not exposed during an illness' incubation period—the time it takes for symptoms to emerge.

Can I stay home to care for my child(ren) because their school or daycare is closed?

- Yes; reference the next question for more information.
- You may not bring children to campus in lieu of daycare.

Will I get paid if I get COVID-19 or otherwise have to stay home?

- If you are unable to work because of illness, whether related to COVID-19 or other health issues, you should not come to work and should follow the University's usual policies and practices related to reporting absence due to illness and using accrued sick leave.
 - This requires you to first contact your supervisor.
 - You will be compensated in accordance with usual University policy: using sick leave first then, if needed, vacation leave.
 - If you do not have sufficient accrued sick and vacation leave to cover the time off due to COVID-19 related illness, you may receive up to 15 days of additional paid leave. This is a one-time allowance of additional paid leave in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
- If you are unable to work in order to care for a sick family member, you should follow the University's usual policies and practices related to reporting absence due to illness and using accrued sick leave.
 - This requires you to first contact your supervisor.
 - You will be compensated in accordance with usual University policy: using sick leave first then, if needed, vacation leave.
 - If you do not have sufficient accrued sick and vacation leave to cover the time off due to COVID-19 related illness, you may receive up to 15 days of additional paid leave. This is a one-time allowance of additional paid leave in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
 - If you are staying home for the purpose of caring for a sick family member and you become ill, contact Human Resources.
- If you are unable to work because of lack of childcare, you should follow the University's usual policies and practices related to reporting absence and using accrued vacation leave.
 - This requires you to first contact your supervisor.
 - You may also speak with your supervisor to determine if you can perform work from home. If your job duties cannot be performed remotely, time off will be compensated using accrued leave.
 - You will be compensated in accordance with usual University policy by using vacation leave. Sick leave may not be used for absence due to lack of childcare.
 - If you do not have sufficient accrued vacation leave to cover the time off, you may receive up to 15 days of additional paid leave. This is a one-time allowance of additional paid leave in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
 - If you are staying home for the purpose of childcare and you become ill, contact Human Resources.

- If you are subject to quarantine you must report your status to Human Resources. You should coordinate with your supervisor to determine what work might be performed remotely. However, you will receive your regular pay for the period of quarantine without reduction of accrued leave. Currently, the period of quarantine is 14 calendar days or 10 work days. If that changes, the University will communicate any changes to this practice.

If I am a non-exempt employee, how is my “regular rate of pay” going to be calculated for quarantine or additional sick or childcare days I may need?

- Your regular rate of pay will be determined by your leave accrual rate. If you have questions, please contact Human Resources.

Do I need a note from my health care provider to return to work if I (or an individual within my household) has been diagnosed with COVID-19?

- Yes. Confirmation from your health care provider that you are clear to return to work must be presented to Human Resources via fax (931.598.3297) or email (hr@sewanee.edu)

Is my job protected if I must stay home because of illness or family care needs?

- Yes; your job is protected if you must stay home due to COVID-19 related illness, quarantine and/or necessity to provide child care illness even if you do not have sufficient accrued leave to cover the time off.

Am I permitted to work remotely?

- The University is not currently moving to a remote work environment, but continues to assess the possibility that employees may be encouraged or required to work from home. At this time, employees are not generally being encouraged to work from home.
- Those employees who must be at home to care for children or to care for another family member or who are quarantined should talk with their supervisor to determine if they can continue to work from home.
- Criteria to be considered by supervisors will include whether or not your job responsibilities can be performed from home and whether you have, or can be provided with, the equipment and technology available to fully perform your job away from campus.
- If you are in a high-risk group for contracting COVID-19 as defined by the CDC (elderly, those with serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or lung disease) contact Human Resources who will help to assess if you can work from home or need other accommodations.

What assistance is available to help me cope with the emotional impact of the situation?

- The University provides resources to help you and your eligible dependents cope with these types of life events through our [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#). Call 877.595.5281 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year). The EAP provides confidential, short-term counseling at no cost to you.
- This resource is available to you regardless of whether or not you are on the University’s health plan.

How is the University's health insurance provider (Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Tennessee) preparing for the coronavirus?

- Effective March 6, 2020 - Our Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Tennessee (BCBST) medical plan will waive all member copays and cost sharing on FDA-approved testing for COVID-19.
- Effective March 16, 2020 - In an effort to allow you to see a provider without leaving your home during the COVID-19 health risk, our BCBST medical plan will waive all member copays and cost sharing on telehealth consultations offered through our [PhysicianNow benefit](#).
- For updated benefit coverages concerning COVID-19 diagnosis and treatment, please visit [BCBST's COVID-19 News Center](#).

Additional Helpful Resources

- [Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 in Homes and Residential Communities](#)
- [Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [If You Are at Higher Risk](#) (CDC definition)
- [What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) (CDC fact sheet)