

# Facts & FAQ - University Employees and COVID-19

Updated March 27, 2020

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to help employees understand how the University will operate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Goal:** To maintain essential and safe operations while preventing the spread of COVID-19.

## Is the University going to close temporarily?

- At this time, the University has no intention of closing; however, certain functions may be limited or temporarily halted.

## Will any employees be laid off or furloughed?

- The University does not have any current plans to lay off or furlough employees and is committed to meeting our payroll commitments through June 30, 2020.
- If a function or University office is closed, employees working in those units will receive additional information specific to their unit regarding continued work.
- 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.

## Am I permitted to work remotely?

- The University implemented a plan for all employees—who can—to work remotely.
- Supervisors have evaluated job duties to determine if remote work is possible.
- Supervisors have also evaluated jobs to determine if those tasks are essential given the changing environment and health concerns.
- Supervisors should verify with their division heads which roles are essential and which roles can be redeployed.

## Am I permitted to work remotely if I have a special situation?

- 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 what job duties can be performed under those circumstances.
- Supervisors can verify if your job responsibilities can be performed from home.
- Assessment of whether you have, or can be provided with, the equipment and technology necessary to fully perform your job away from campus has also occurred and you will be provided what is necessary to support remote work.
- If you are in a high-risk group for contracting COVID-19 as defined by the CDC (65 years of age or older, those with serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or lung disease, or who are immunocompromised) please contact Human Resources and your supervisor to make arrangements. Some jobs cannot readily be performed from home or by other employees, and they will need to be considered on a case by case basis.

**What if not all of my job duties can be performed remotely? Will I still get paid my full-time pay?**

- It is the University's intention to maintain our current payroll obligations through at least June 30, 2020. That means, if you are required to work remotely, but not all of your job duties can be performed from home, you will still be paid your full-time wages/salary. However, you must be available for work during your regular work hours. If you are asked to perform duties which you are qualified and able to perform, even if not your usual duties, you must perform those duties as assigned during your regular work hours. We will need everyone to be flexible to learning new skills.

**How should I record my hours worked if I do not have enough duties to perform remotely to fill my usual hours of work.**

- Unless you are sick or otherwise unable to work, you should record your regularly scheduled hours worked on all work days.
- Because remote work will require that you be available for additional assignments or to be redeployed for work for which you are qualified during your regular work hours, you are considered to be working during those hours. Again, you must remain available to respond to University assignments while you are working remotely.
- If you are in a CDC-defined vulnerable population for exposure to COVID-19 (65 years of age or older, those with serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or lung disease, or who are immunocompromised), you still remain available for additional duties to be performed remotely and should record your regularly scheduled work hours for all work days.
- If you are unable to work due to illness, you should contact your supervisor and record hours sick in accordance with regular University practice.
- If you are unable to work because you take time off for any reason other than your own illness or to care for a family member who is ill, you should record that time as vacation time, also in accordance with regular University practice.
- The University anticipates that some degree of flexibility in when and how work is performed remotely is to be expected. Both supervisors and employees will need to communicate needs and questions with regard to what work is to be performed and how it is to be accomplished.
- The University is proud to have dedicated and diligent employees. We anticipate that all employees will continue accurately to record their regularly scheduled hours of work, even if some of the work is performed outside of the regular work hours. However, employees still need to seek permission to work any overtime if they are unable to complete assigned remote work within the usual number of work hours per day. You should follow your worksite protocols for requesting overtime.

**If I prefer to simply take a leave of absence during this time, may I do so? If I do take a leave of absence, will I still get paid?**

- If you wish to take a leave of absence, you will only be paid to the extent you have accrued vacation time to cover the leave. If you wish to take additional leave without pay, you should speak to your supervisor, who will consult with Human Resources. It is the University's intention to maintain job security and regular pay for our employees throughout this emergency time. Some jobs, however, cannot readily be performed by other employees, and that will need to be considered on a case by case basis when assessing a request for leave without pay. Where possible, leave without pay will be approved in accordance with provisions in the [Staff](#)

[Handbook](#) on Leave of Absence Without Pay, and your position will be available on the condition you return to work when this emergency period is over.

### **What if I am in a high-risk group?**

- The CDC defines the following as being at high-risk for contracting COVID-19: age 65 or older, those with serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or lung disease, or who are immunocompromised.
- If you have any medical concern related to the impact or risk associated with COVID-19 based on your personal health condition(s), please contact your healthcare provider.
- 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. If you are working on campus, 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 or refrain from remote work and follow normal University practices regarding your absence/inability to work.
- If you feel sick with symptoms that could be COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing), you should stay home, avoid contact with others, not travel, call the office of your healthcare provider to seek advice, and notify your supervisor.
- For additional information you may also contact the Tennessee Coronavirus Hotline at 877-857-2945 from 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Central. Call volume may be high. More information is available from the CDC: [CDC: What to do if you are sick](#); [CDC: Caring for yourself at home \(pdf\)](#)

### **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, call the office of your healthcare provider for advice, and notify your supervisor.
- If your healthcare provider recommends quarantine or isolation, contact Human Resources.
- The CDC has advice for caring for someone with symptoms: [CDC: Caring for someone at home](#)

### **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 if you are working on campus, you should refrain from work if you have been working remotely, and 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 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, even if you are already working remotely. If you are not already working remotely, 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?**

- If you are working remotely during the period of quarantine, you should record your regularly scheduled hours.
- If for any reason you are unable to work during a period of quarantine and are not available to be assigned duties remotely, your regular rate of pay will be determined by your leave accrual rate. Please see question above on “Will I get paid if I get COVID-19 or otherwise have to stay home?” If you have questions, please contact Human Resources.

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

- Yes. If you are working remotely when you become sick and unable to work, you should follow your usual workplace practice for reporting absence due to illness and record that time as sick leave. You should also notify your supervisor when you are well enough to resume remote work duties. Whether you are returning to work on campus or resuming remote work duties, 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](mailto: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 are unable to work, either on campus or remotely, due to COVID-19-related illness, quarantine and/or necessity to provide child care, even if you do not have sufficient accrued leave to cover the time off.

**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](#).

**COVID-19 Quick Links**

The COVID-19 Community Team has prepared a survey for the Sewanee community to help identify both community volunteers and community needs. Please [complete the brief form found here](#).

#### General Information & Reporting

- [COVID19.sewanee.edu](https://COVID19.sewanee.edu)
- [COVID-19 Reports in Tennessee by county](#)
- [Governor Bill Lee's State of Emergency, Executive Order 14](#) & [Executive Order 17](#)

#### Prevention

- [CDC: How to protect yourself, your family, your home](#)
- [CDC: How to manage your stress & anxiety](#)

#### Travel

- [CDC: Travelers returning](#) (International and domestic)

#### Care

- [CDC: What to do if you are sick](#)
- [CDC: Caring for yourself at home \(pdf\)](#)
- [CDC: Caring for someone at home](#)
- [CDC: Cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#)

## Additional Information Regarding Use and Applicability of University Leave

| Situation   | Leave  |
|---|--|
| Employee is sick with COVID-19 symptoms   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employee may use accrued sick leave, then vacation leave.</li> <li>● If employee does not have sufficient accrued sick and vacation leave to cover the time off, the University may provide up to 15 days of additional paid leave.</li> </ul>  |
| Employee is needed to stay home to care for a family member who is sick with COVID-19 symptoms  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employee may use accrued sick leave, then vacation leave.</li> <li>● If employee does not have sufficient accrued sick and vacation leave to cover the time off, the University may provide up to 15 days of additional paid leave.</li> </ul>  |
| Employee is needed to stay home with child(ren) whose school or daycare has closed because of COVID-19  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employee may use accrued vacation leave .</li> <li>● Employee may <b>not</b> use accrued sick leave.</li> <li>● If employee does not have sufficient accrued vacation leave to cover the time off, the University may provide up to 15 days of additional paid leave.</li> </ul>  |
| Employee is quarantined because of exposure to someone infected with COVID-19   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If employee's job cannot be performed remotely, the University will provide paid leave for the duration of the quarantine period, currently 14 calendar days or 10 work days.</li> </ul>  |
| Employee is in a high-risk group as defined by the CDC <b>and</b> has work that can be done from home   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employee will work remotely.</li> </ul>   |
| Employee is in a high-risk group as defined by the CDC and needs to stays home, but <b>cannot</b> do their work from home                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employee should contact Maris Owens, HR Specialist, who will help to assess accommodations.</li> <li>● If employee remains available for work assignments, but cannot perform regular duties remotely, and cannot be assigned alternative duties that could be performed remotely, employee will still be paid regular wages/salary. Maris Owens will work directly with employee and supervisor in making determinations.</li> </ul>   |
| Employee is <b>not</b> in a high-risk group as defined by the CDC, but is worried about potential exposure to the virus and does not come to work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employee should be assigned to work remotely in accordance with the University's interim, COVID-19-related remote work practices. See FAQs above.</li> <li>● If employee is qualified for duties that must be performed on campus and is assigned to be redeployed, employee must accept assigned duties, or seek a leave of absence the supervisor.</li> <li>● With proper notice and supervisor approval, employee may use vacation leave to be paid for the time away from work.</li> <li>● Sick leave may not be used in this situation.</li> <li>● An unpaid leave of absence with job protection is possible; employee must discuss this with the supervisor.</li> <li>● Employee's supervisor will consult with HR for further guidance</li> </ul> |

