



RSCCD's HR Guidance During Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak Frequently Asked Questions

This document will be updated (last update: March 19, 2020) and circulated as additional questions come to our attention.

Nothing contained in this document is intended to supersede RSCCD policy or collective bargaining agreements.

Time Off and Pay When the Campus Remains Open

What should I do if I develop coronavirus symptoms?

If you become ill with coronavirus symptoms, which are described by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a fever, dry cough, and difficulty breathing, contact your primary care provider who will advise you on options for care.

The CDC guidelines recommend that if you are ill:

- Notify your supervisor that you are ill and will not be able to work.
- Stay home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Avoid contact with other people and avoid social gatherings as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. Wear a facemask if keeping a distance of 6 feet from another individual is not possible.
- When coughing or sneezing, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue and then throw the tissue away and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

When can I return to work if I have had Coronavirus?

COVID-19 can be transmitted before, during, and after an infected person has symptoms; however, a person is most contagious during a fever. You should stay home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever, or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Though the lingering of some symptoms (e.g. cough) may not be reason to remain at home, it is important to maintain prevention measures as it is still possible to transmit the virus for up to 7 days after you get sick.

If an employee is sent home, or stays home from work due to illness, how will he/she be paid?

The following options are available although not all options will be available in all situations depending upon the nature of the job responsibilities and the extent of the illness:

- Use accrued leave; for example, Vacation or Sick Leave;
- Use accrued compensatory time;
- Work from home with supervisory approval if appropriate;
- The District will provide an advancement of leave to you.

I have an employee with little or no sick leave accrued and several others with large accruals. Can they donate sick leave to the person with no accruals if that person becomes ill and cannot come to work?

No, the policy on donation of leave does not apply in situations of minor illness or where the absence is of short duration.

Do I have to use my own accrued leave if my supervisor sends me home even though I think I'm well enough to work?

Yes, you must use your own accrued leave or the District will provide an advancement of leave to you. Depending upon the nature of your illness and your job responsibilities, you may request an absence without pay, or work from home with supervisory approval if appropriate.

I do not have enough leave to cover my absence from work due to Coronavirus. How can I afford to stay home until I am completely well before returning to work?

To minimize the potential exposure to others, it is very important that you do not return to work until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.

The following options are available, although not all options will be available in all situations, depending upon the nature of the job responsibilities and the extent of the illness.

- With a Doctor's note permanent employees are entitled up to 100 days of sick time, which after all accrued leaves are used is paid at 50% of their daily rate.
- Work from home with supervisory approval and it is appropriate.
- The District will provide an advancement of leave to you.
- Request a leave without pay for up to 7 days with supervisory approval. If a doctor certifies that you are unable to work, short term disability benefits may be available after a 7-calendar day waiting period, to cover part of your lost wages.

I have an employee who is ill and has come into work. I am concerned about the potential for exposure to other people. Can I send this employee home?

Yes. Of greatest concern is an employee with a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (using an oral thermometer) coupled with coughing or sneezing; as a person is most contagious during a fever. This employee should definitely be sent home. Other flu-like symptoms may also be of concern; the decision to send an employee home who is exhibiting these symptoms is to be made on a case-by-case basis. In addition, supervisors should advise all employees of the basic preventative measures (practice good hygiene, including thorough and frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands).

May I choose to go home if I don't want to be exposed to a sick coworker who isn't sent home?

Yes, with supervisory approval you may leave work; however, you must use your own accrued leave or the District will provide an advancement of leave to you. With your supervisor's approval, you may request a leave without pay, work a different schedule, or work from home options may be available to you.

I am not sick, but I do not want to come to work for fear of becoming ill. Is my supervisor required to approve my request for time off?

You may, with supervisory approval, request Vacation or Personal Leave; however, your supervisor may elect not to grant your request for time off, especially if your department is short staffed. It is important to educate yourself about the Coronavirus and its transmission. If you are pregnant, over 65, or have underlying health conditions that may increase your risk of developing complications related to the flu (such as asthma, diabetes, immune suppression, or heart, lung, kidney, or liver disease), consult with your health care provider to discuss your concerns and appropriate strategies to support your health.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, can my supervisor cancel my leave request that has already been approved?

Yes, your supervisor has the authority to cancel any pre-approved leave request, especially in circumstances where there are serious staffing shortages as a result of illness.

My child's school (daycare) is closed due to circulation of Coronavirus, and my child is not sick. I have no other childcare arrangements. Can I bring him to work with me?

No, bringing a child to work is not recommended or advisable—and in many work areas it is prohibited.

My child's school (daycare) is closed due to circulation of Coronavirus, and my child is not sick. I have no other childcare arrangements and must stay home with him. How will I be paid?

Promptly notify your supervisor of the reason for your absence and your anticipated return to work date. In this situation, the following options are available, although not all options will be available in all situations, depending upon the nature of your job responsibilities:

- Use accrued vacation, personal necessity, or family health care leave.
- Use accrued compensatory time.
- Work from home with supervisory approval.
- The District will provide an advancement of leave to you.
- Request a leave without pay with supervisory approval.

Does FMLA apply if my spouse or child gets sick with Coronavirus, and I must stay home to care for him/her?

- In most cases yes, provided the employee and family member meet the eligibility requirements.
- FMLA requires the district to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid job protected leave to an eligible employee to care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition; or for a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job.
- An employee is entitled to FMLA if he or she has worked for the district for at least 12 cumulative months and has been paid for at least a 1,250 hours in the previous 12 months.

If I have been exposed to someone with Coronavirus symptoms and/or confirmed or suspected Coronavirus, should I come to work?

No, it is important to educate yourself about the Coronavirus and its transmission. If you are pregnant, over 65, or have underlying health conditions that may increase your risk of developing complications related to the Coronavirus (such as asthma, diabetes, immune suppression, or heart, lung, kidney, or liver disease), consult with your health care provider to discuss your concerns and appropriate strategies to support your health. All employees are able to come to work normally without restrictions unless they have Coronavirus symptoms.

Work Schedules/Alternative Worksites

Does my supervisor have to approve my request to telecommute if there is widespread illness?

Supervisory approval is necessary to work from home, but not all requests to telecommute can be approved. Not every position is suitable for telecommuting, due to specific job duties that cannot be performed at home or operating requirements of the unit.

Can my supervisor schedule me to work hours or shifts that I normally do not work?

Yes, you may be asked to work more hours or different hours than normal, especially if the campus is short staffed as a result of the influenza outbreak. The campus will attempt to provide advance notice if possible.

If a large number of employees are unable to come to work because of illness from the flu, are there a maximum number of overtime hours my supervisor can require me to work?

In the event illness becomes more severe or widespread, everyone may need to work differently to ensure the campus continues to function. You may be asked to work more hours or different hours than normal, especially if the campus is short staffed. Supervisors will make every effort to limit the number of overtime hours and to permit employees to take rest periods, and may use their discretion in scheduling additional breaks for employees working additional hours.

General Questions about Coronavirus

What are the symptoms of the Coronavirus?

According to the CDC, the symptoms of Coronavirus in people are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu and include fever, dry cough, difficulty breathing, and mild to severe respiratory illness.

Are Coronavirus evaluations available on campus for faculty and staff?

No. If you are experiencing Coronavirus symptoms, please contact your primary care provider for evaluation. The Student Health Center is the primary care provider for RSCCD's students and does not provide primary care services for staff and faculty.

How severe is illness associated with Coronavirus virus?

Illness with the Coronavirus has ranged from mild to severe. Most people who have been sick have recovered fully without needing medical treatment. However, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

Who is at higher risk of serious complications?

According to the CDC, certain people are at "high risk" of serious complications. This includes people 65 years and older with certain chronic medical conditions. Many of the people who have been hospitalized with the Coronavirus have had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at "high risk" of serious complications.

How is the Coronavirus transmitted?

According to the CDC, the Coronavirus is spread from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. These droplets can move through the air about 6 feet before they fall to the surface (of a desk, table, sink, keyboard, etc.) The Coronavirus spreads when a person comes into contact with the respiratory droplets of an infected person:

- directly, including by sharing eating or drinking utensils, kissing, etc. (This is why keeping a distance of about 6 feet from a sick person is important.)
- indirectly, by touching a surface or object that has Coronavirus on it and then touching one's own mouth, nose, or eyes. (This is why frequent hand washing and cleaning of shared surfaces is important.)

What preventative measures should I encourage employees to take?

Awareness, thoughtfulness, and communication are the key ingredients to reducing the risk of catching *and* spreading the Coronavirus (and other illnesses). Encourage group conversations now about ways to reduce the risk in their particular workspace, posters to display to make others aware of your concerns, expectations of each other regarding staying home when sick. Make sure everyone knows the common public health advice to avoid the Coronavirus:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- If tissues are not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, especially after you cough, sneeze, or touch shared surfaces. If soap and water are not available, hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Regularly clean all areas and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact and immediately when visibly soiled. This may help, but should not substitute for hand washing.
- Do not share cups, eating utensils, smoking paraphernalia, lip balm, etc.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Keep a distance of about 6 feet if possible.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Strengthen your immune system: eat a balanced diet; exercise on a regular basis; get plenty of rest.

I have a staff member who has asked to wear a facemask when meeting with students, staff, and customers. How do I respond?

At this time wearing a facemask is not advised for healthy persons. The California Department of Public Health officials advise that anyone who is sick with Coronavirus or flu-like symptoms should wear a surgical mask when close contact (within 6 feet) with others cannot be avoided. Facemasks may help to reduce the risk of transmitting the Coronavirus from a sick person to others, especially when used along with other preventative measures.

I meet with students, staff, and customers as part of my job responsibilities. What should I do if I encounter someone who is obviously sick?

As with other forms of the flu or contagious illnesses such as colds, maintaining a reasonable distance from the sick person is a starting point. Do not shake hands or make other physical contact. After the person has left, use a disinfectant wipe to clean those areas of your work station that the person has touched. There may be situations in which the meeting or encounter can be re-scheduled to a time when the person is feeling better, or the business can be conducted by phone or e-mail. Do not hesitate to offer this suggestion if it is appropriate.

The stress about Coronavirus seems to be getting to people. How can I help?

Humans by nature tend to be more afraid of what we do not know than what we do know, and when the threat is something people cannot recognize or count or otherwise control, it can create a high level of anxiety for some. Others meet the circumstance through denial, humor, and resignation.

Your help can make a difference:

- Meet fear with facts. Information is available from the leading public health resource in the country: www.cdc.gov. These facts can help us put even tragedy in a realistic perspective.
- Stop rumors. If you hear something that does not sound right, or that you have not heard from a reputable source, please check it out. Misinformation can only be remedied by good information, and there is plenty available. Much is known about available self-care recommendations and medical interventions, as well as RSCCD's policies and plans.
- Help people regain control. Remind them that the most successful responses to any kind of community crisis is a neighbor-by-neighbor response. More than ever, being a caring community in this moment means taking good care of ourselves and each other: supporting each other in our efforts to stay healthy; planning together how we will manage if a member of our work group is sick or caring for a sick family member; reaching out to others with messages about essential Coronavirus prevention strategies.
- Making a plan with family, friends, or neighbors ways to support each other's recovery and period of isolation in the event of illness; putting in place plans for alternative care for children and elders; preparing a health kit; getting vaccinated; writing down phone numbers of health care providers; knowing what to watch for—all of these actions can help people feel more empowered to deal with this new version of a well-known illness.