
These Frequently Asked Questions are primarily in regard to the work and leave provisions in effect March 16-March 31, 2020 for the UNC System. As this is a quickly changing event, this document will continue to be updated to reflect subsequent policy or procedural changes and is not meant to replace official directives from state or university officials.

Q: When can an employee use paid administrative leave?

For March 16 – April 30, 2020, a permanent or temporary employee may be granted paid administrative leave if:

- (1) The employee is quarantined by a public health official due to possible exposure but has not been determined to be infected with COVID-19
- (2) The employee is having symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath) or caring for a dependent with such symptoms
- (3) The employee is high risk for COVID-19 infection or is a caregiver to someone who is high risk
- (4) The employee must care for a parent, child, or spouse due to a child/elder care facility or school closing
- (5) The employee is not a mandatory employee and, due to the nature of their position, cannot perform their duties remotely

Q: I am having symptoms that may be consistent with the coronavirus. What should I do?

Employees should contact their health care providers for guidance. If employees are showing virus-related symptoms, then they should stay home following usual procedures for notifying their supervisor. Management may approve paid administrative leave for temporary and permanent employees who request leave due to having symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath) through April 30, 2020. If an employee is feeling well enough to work, they may also arrange with their supervisor to work remotely, if possible, but employees who are sick for any reason should focus on getting well rather than working.

Q: I have been quarantined by a public health official. What leave can I use?

Employees who are quarantined at the direction of public health officials will receive paid administrative leave until the specified period of time ends or the employee becomes ill, whichever comes first. This applies to both permanent and temporary employees. Written verification from a public health official is required to confirm this status as soon as practicable.

Once a permanent employee becomes ill, then the employee can receive paid administrative leave through April 30, 2020, and if ill beyond that date, use available compensatory leave, sick leave, vacation leave, or bonus leave. If the employee does not have enough sick leave, the institution may work with the employee to advance leave or make arrangements for the employee to make up the time if the UNC System or institution determines that the work situation will allow it.

Q: I don't have much leave to use in the event I become ill but I can't afford to go without pay. What can I do?

Management may approve up paid administrative leave for temporary and permanent employees who request leave due to having symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath) through April 30, 2020. If a permanent employee does not otherwise have enough paid leave available, the institution may work with the employee to advance sick or vacation leave or to make arrangements for the employee to make up the time if the UNC System or institution determines that the work situation will allow it.

Q: My job is one where working from home is not possible. Will I get paid?

Yes. Non-mandatory employees (permanent and temporary) should discuss their options for working offsite with their supervisors. If a supervisor determines that a permanent employee cannot perform their duties remotely, then the employee may be granted paid administrative leave through April 30, 2020. After April 30, permanent employees would have to use available vacation leave, bonus leave, or compensatory time. Temporary employees who cannot work remotely may be granted paid administrative leave through March 31, 2020. Starting April 1, the chancellor at each institution may determine based on institutional needs whether or not some or all temporary employees (including students and retirees) would continue to work or receive paid leave.

Q: When can an employee use the pandemic make up leave provisions?

Similar to adverse weather make-up provisions, permanent employees may use paid administrative leave and make up the time within 24 months if:

- (1) The employee is sick and has exhausted their sick leave, or
- (2) The employee cannot work due to closings of child/elder care facilities or schools (employee does not have to exhaust their available leave to use make up leave).

Through March 31, 2020, both temporary and permanent employees may use paid administrative leave for these two issues. For April 1-30, permanent employees continue to use paid administrative leave for these two issues. Starting April 1, the chancellor at each institution may determine based on institutional needs whether or not some or all temporary employees (including students and retirees) would continue to work or receive paid leave. After April 30, permanent employees may use the make up leave if applicable; however, temporary employees would not have paid leave available to them.

Q: Who are high-risk individuals?

Public health officials have identified people as “high-risk” for contracting COVID-19 and experiencing greater complications as those who meet any of the following criteria or who may care for someone with any of the following criteria:

- are over 65 years of age,
- have underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes, and/or
- have weakened immune systems.

Q: If I need to stay home to avoid risk of exposure for myself or for a high risk family member, and I can't work remotely, what are my leave options?

If there is reason to believe an employee has been exposed, or has a high-risk individual in the household, and the employee cannot perform work remotely, then the employee (permanent and temporary) may use paid administrative leave through March 31, 2020. Permanent employees may continue to use paid administrative leave, if applicable, through April 30, 2020. Starting April 1, the chancellor at each institution may determine based on institutional needs whether or not some or all temporary employees (including students and retirees) would continue to work or receive paid leave. After April 30, if the employee is not symptomatic or is not caring for a symptomatic or high risk family member, then a permanent employee would need to use available vacation, bonus, or compensatory time.

Revised 3/27/2020

Q: I am not in the high-risk category but I have a medical condition that is impacting my ability to work due to the COVID-19 outbreak. What should I do?

Through April 30, 2020, only mandatory employees should report to work onsite. After that date, employees with medical conditions that could be exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak should contact Human Resources and/or the institution's ADA Compliance Officer to request an accommodation. Accommodations may include work from home arrangements, adjustments of work schedules, or adjustments of work locations. Employees will be required to provide medical documentation of their condition and how it may be exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Q: I am pregnant and am concerned about exposure if I report to work. What should I do?

The UNC System is monitoring [information from the CDC](#) regarding COVID-19 and pregnant women. Through April 30, 2020, only mandatory employees should report to work onsite. After April 30, supervisors should work with Human Resources and/or the institution's ADA Compliance Officer to review available options based on the essential job functions, healthcare provider information, and the most recently available guidance from the CDC and other public health officials.

Q: My child's school and my elderly parent's facility is closed. Can I work from home to care for them?

Yes. When the UNC System Office or an institution is open but a non-mandatory employee is required to stay home with a spouse, child, or parent because of the closure of a day care facility, school, or eldercare facility, the non-mandatory employee (permanent or temporary) may use paid administrative leave through March 31, 2020 if the employee cannot work from home due to the child/elder needs or because their work cannot be performed remotely. Supervisors may discuss alternative work off-hours work teleworking schedules that may better accommodate the employee's needs, and teleworking arrangement may include a combination of part-time work and paid leave.

For April 1-30, a permanent non-mandatory employee may, with approval of their supervisor, be allowed to work at home, to elect to use available leave, or, if the employee has insufficient leave available, to advance leave or to allow the employee to make up time within 24 months as provided by policy. The institution has the right to request appropriate documentation to substantiate need.

Starting April 1, the chancellor at each institution may determine based on institutional needs whether or not some or all temporary employees (including students and retirees) would continue to work or receive paid leave.

Q: Can I work remotely part of the time and only come to my workplace a couple of days a week?

Through April 30, only mandatory employees should report to work onsite. Supervisors may determine whether an employee should work their full schedule onsite or work a combination onsite/telework schedule. Employees will need to coordinate with their supervisors to determine the parameters of their teleworking arrangements. This kind of arrangement may include other onsite social distancing practices (employees being onsite alternate days, or some in the morning, some in the afternoon, etc.) to reduce close contact among employees or to fulfill mandatory onsite work.

Revised 3/27/2020

Q: I have a job that would allow me to work remotely, and my supervisor is agreeable to it, but I would prefer to come to work. Do I have to work remotely?

Through April 30, only mandatory employees should report to work onsite. Supervisors may determine whether an employee should work their full schedule onsite, offsite, or work a combination onsite/telework schedule. Teleworking arrangements may include working part-time or full-time offsite. The supervisor will make the final determination, since decisions for employees working onsite must be coordinated to reduce close contact among employees.

Q: How are we to handle operational and staffing impacts to those employees whose work relies on the physical presence of students and faculty? Will employees without available work be required to use available leave?

All permanent and temporary employees, including student employees, who are not designated as mandatory and who cannot perform their work duties from home may receive paid administrative leave through March 31, 2020. For April 1-30, permanent employees may continue to receive paid administrative leave. Starting April 1, the chancellor at each institution may determine based on institutional needs whether or not some or all temporary employees (including students and retirees) would continue to work or receive paid leave.

After April 30, permanent employees would have to use available vacation/bonus leave or compensatory time or take leave without pay, and temporary employees who are not directed to work remotely will not receive compensation under current policy provisions.

Q: I have an employee who is not feeling well and appears to have symptoms that may be related to the communicable disease outbreak. Can I tell them to stay home?

If an employee is not subject to quarantine by public health authorities, but the employee has symptoms associated with a communicable disease, then UNC System or constituent institution leadership may direct the employee to not report to work. Contact Human Resources for guidance. Management may approve paid administrative leave for temporary and permanent employees demonstrating symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath through March 31, 2020. For April 1-30, permanent employees may continue to receive paid administrative leave. Starting April 1, the chancellor at each institution may determine based on institutional needs whether or not some or all temporary employees (including students and retirees) would continue to work or receive paid leave. If the employee feels well enough to work, the supervisor could allow the employee to work remotely full-time or part-time.

Q: What happens if an employee can't perform their usual work from a remote location?

Not all positions may be able to telework for a sustained period of time. We encourage supervisors to try to find assignments that employees can perform remotely, such as online training, if their regular duties cannot be done outside the office. Otherwise, both permanent and temporary employees may use paid administrative leave through March 31, 2020. For April 1-30, permanent employees may continue to receive paid administrative leave. Starting April 1, the chancellor at each institution may determine based on institutional needs whether or not some or all temporary employees (including students and retirees) would continue to work or receive paid leave. After April 30, permanent employees who cannot work from home would need to use available vacation/bonus leave or compensatory time. Temporary employees who cannot work remotely after April 30 will not receive compensation under current policy provisions.

MANDATORY EMPLOYEES

For employees

Q: Who are mandatory employees, what does that mean, and how do I know if I am one?

For the purposes of the COVID-19 event only, mandatory employees are employees (permanent or temporary) who are required to work onsite during a public health emergency because their positions have been designated by the institution as mandatory to operations during the emergency. Designated mandatory employees will be notified by their supervisors and informed if they are required to report for or remain at work in emergency situations. Additional employees may also be designated to work if needed due to the length of the emergency, illness of mandatory employees, or other needs. (Note: due to the length and severity of this event, the definition of “mandatory employee” used in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak is different than what is typically used during an adverse weather event or other emergency.)

Q: I am a mandatory employee. How will I be paid?

Mandatory employees receive their regular pay through March 31. Starting April 1, hourly (FLSA-subject) mandatory employees will receive time and a half for all hours required to be worked on-site. For salaried (FLSA-exempt) mandatory employees (SHRA and EHRA) will receive time and a half for up to 40 hours in a work week for hours required to be worked on-site. Please note that certain faculty, senior leadership, and other highly-compensated employees may be excluded from this additional compensation, even if designated as mandatory. The added compensation may be provided as pay or compensatory time, at the chancellor’s discretion.

Q: How will I know if I am designated as a mandatory employee?

Mandatory employees should have already been notified by their supervisor of this designation and the requirements that come along with it. Employees with questions should talk with their direct supervisor or the institution’s HR office.

Q: I’m a mandatory employee and my manager informed me I need to report to work during this emergency event. Can I refuse to do so?

Employees are designated as mandatory due to the nature of their work for the university and are expected to perform those duties as required. Situations in which a mandatory employee cannot report to work as directed will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Willful failure of a mandatory employee to report for or remain at work may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Q: I am a mandatory employee who is ill. Should I still report to work?

Mandatory employees may be excused from work if they are quarantined or ill, if they are required to care for a spouse, child, or parent who is quarantined or ill, or if they are required to stay home with parents or underage children because of the closure of a day care facility, school or eldercare facility. Permanent employees may use paid administrative leave through April 30, 2020, and afterward will be required to use available compensatory leave, sick leave, vacation leave, or bonus leave. Temporary employees may use paid administrative leave through March 31, 2020. Starting April 1, the chancellor at each institution may determine based on institutional needs whether or not some or all temporary employees (including students and retirees) would continue to work or receive paid leave.

Revised 3/27/2020

For supervisors

Q: I have a mandatory employee who is ill. Should they still report to work?

Mandatory employees may be excused from work if they are quarantined or demonstrating symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath) and receive paid administrative leave for these absences through March 31, 2020. For April 1 through April 30, permanent employees may continue to receive paid administrative leave. Starting April 1, the chancellor at each institution may determine based on institutional needs whether or not some or all temporary employees (including students and retirees) would continue to work or receive paid leave.

Q: I am a manager and I have not designated anyone as a mandatory employee -- what should I do?

Your department's leadership determines what critical operations need to continue in the event of a public health emergency, and also which positions must be staffed to continue those operations. Primary and secondary mandatory employees should be designated. Management must notify employees of their mandatory personnel designation and the requirement to report for or remain at work. Employees should receive appropriate information and training as needed. If mandatory personnel are required to remain at the worksite for an extended period of time, the University will provide adequate housing and food.

Q: I am a manager and I have primary and secondary mandatory employees designated, but I need more coverage during this emergency event. Can I designate additional employees as mandatory employees?

Yes. Additional employees may be designated to work as needed due to the length of the emergency, illness of mandatory employees, or other needs. Employees are expected to receive appropriate information and training as needed. If mandatory personnel are required to remain at the worksite for an extended period of time, the University will provide adequate housing and food.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Q: Does the State Health Plan offer telemedicine options for plan members to use, and are those free of charge?

Blue Cross Blue Shield NC will expand and promote access to virtual visits with primary care providers wherever possible. Members who have concerns about whether they have been exposed to COVID-19 should call their primary care provider to determine if telehealth services are available. Virtual visits are covered under the State Health Plan.

Q: Will the State Health Plan charge employees for a COVID-19 test?

The State Health Plan will cover any coronavirus testing requested by a health care provider or public health authority; however, there may still be an office visit co-pay required.

Q: Can I get early refills on maintenance medications just in case?

Yes. Because North Carolina has declared a State of Emergency, State Health Plan members can request an early refill on 30-day prescriptions for maintenance medications at any in-network pharmacy. Consult with your provider and pharmacy.