Employee FAQs (updated 6/22/20)

Q1: Where can I find information about the University’s response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

A1: All campus communication related to COVID-19 can be found on the University of Vermont’s Fall 2020 Return to Campus website. This includes general information about COVID-19 and answers to questions about health, wellness, and prevention for students, faculty, and staff.

Q2: When can I return to work if I had COVID-19, Influenza, or another contagious-illness?

A2: If you are feeling unwell and/or showing signs of illness, you should not come to work. Employees should follow the recommended guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Vermont Department of Health. Currently, the CDC recommends that employees not return to work until at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared. To avoid unnecessary medical visits and putting additional strain on Vermont’s healthcare system, employees should NOT be asked to produce a physician’s certificate before returning to work.

Q3: I meet with people frequently as part of my job responsibilities. What should I do if I suspect someone is showing symptoms of illness?

A3: You should encourage all individuals to practice cough and sneeze etiquette (cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve), to wash hands often with soap and water, and to regularly use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. If you observe a co-worker showing symptoms of illness, you can encourage them to talk to their supervisor about going home if they are ill and/or you can talk to your own supervisor about your observations. Please be cautious about making assumptions and avoid words and actions that could be viewed as stigmatizing or discriminating.

Q4: Will my UVM-sponsored healthcare plan cover a test for COVID-19?

A4: The University’s health care plan will cover COVID-19 testing performed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), or a laboratory approved by CDC or VDH, with no co-payment, coinsurance, or deductible requirements. This coverage includes in-network provider office or urgent care visits and emergency services visits to test for COVID-19. If in-network providers are unavailable to conduct testing for COVID-19, the health care plan will cover out-of-network testing on the terms outlined above. For more detailed information on the terms of coverage of the University’s health plan, please visit the Benefits page on the Human Resource Services website.

Q5: What assistance is available to me to help cope with the emotional impact of a COVID-19 outbreak?
A5: The University provides employee assistance counseling through InvestEAP. Counselors can be reached 24 hours a day/7 days a week at 802-864-3270 and through the website at www.investeap.org (password: UVM). Their services are available to all UVM employees and their family members. InvestEAP will remain available even in a Vermont-declared state of emergency.

Q6: If I need to self-quarantine for 14 days, will I need to use my accrued leave time?

A6: If you need to self-quarantine, and your job does not lend itself to working remotely, you may use any form of accrued leave (e.g., sick leave, vacation, comp time, personal leave, cultural holidays) to cover the time away from work. In addition, effective April 1, 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provides up to ten days of paid sick leave (up to a maximum of $511/day) for full-time employees who are subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19. (For more information about the FFCRA, see the Answer to Question 9.)

If you have exhausted all forms of accrued paid leave (sick, personal, vacation, cultural holiday, and compensatory time), as well as paid sick leave under the FFCRA, UVM will allow you to go into a sick time deficit of up to 10 additional days for purposes of a self-quarantine of COVID-19 related illness, care, or testing. If you go into a sick time deficit, you will not accrue any further sick time until the deficit is paid back. UVM reserves the right to recoup any remaining sick time deficits from the final paycheck of employees who terminate before they regain a positive sick time balance. Alternatively, UVM will grant unpaid time to an employee who has no accrued leave time but needs time off to self-quarantine.

No matter what form of paid or unpaid leave you elect, please speak with your supervisor to make them aware of your situation, and get information on how to report your leave use.

Employees who worked on campus within 14 days of first exhibiting symptoms and are known or presumed to have COVID-19 because they are sick with COVID-19 symptoms, or have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, or have been directed by their doctor or the health department to stay home, should also complete UVM’s COVID-19 tracking form.

Employees working remotely more than 14 days do not need to complete UVM’s COVID-19 tracking form, but still need to follow human resources policies for reporting exception time when they are unable to work for COVID-19 related reasons.

Q7: Daycare providers and PK-12 schools in the area are closed and I need to care for my children so I cannot report to work. What are my options?

A7: Speak with your supervisor to determine if your job responsibilities are compatible with working from home. If they are, and if your situation at home enables you to telework effectively, your supervisor may allow temporary teleworking arrangements to be put in place, and you should complete a Teleworking Agreement.
Employees who cannot work from home may request to use any form of accrued paid leave (sick leave, vacation, comp time, personal leave, and cultural holidays). Effective April 1, 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provides full-time employees up to twelve weeks of paid leave at 67% of their salary (up to a maximum of $200/day) to care for children whose schools or daycare facilities have closed due to COVID-19. For the first two weeks (10 days) of this leave, the employee must first use: any form of accrued paid leave, emergency paid sick leave under the FFCRA, or take 10 days of unpaid leave.

Employees who wish to do so or who have exhausted all forms of paid leave and FFCRA leave should speak to their supervisor about the possibility of using unpaid leave. Supervisors should contact Human Resource Services for assistance. Employees may not bring their children to work.

No matter what form of paid or unpaid leave you elect, please speak with your supervisor to make them aware of your situation, and get information on how to report your leave use.

**Q8: I am an essential employee and have been directed to come to work on campus. I am afraid of being infected and do not want to come to work. What are my options?**

**A8:** Employees who prefer to not work should contact their supervisor to request to use their own leave accruals, or to request unpaid leave. Essential employees are needed to report to work; in the absence of sufficient backup, leave requests under these circumstances may be denied.

**Q9: I do not have any accumulated leave balances, I am unable to telecommute, and I need to stay home due to illness, self-isolation or quarantine requirements, or active care of others due to COVID-19. What should I do?**

**A9:** Effective April 1, 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provides eligible employees the following benefits:

**Emergency Paid Sick Leave**

An employee is eligible for emergency paid sick leave (EPSL) if the employee is unable to work or to telework because the employee:

- is subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
- has been advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine due to COVID-19 symptoms;
- needs to obtain a medical diagnosis or receive care related to COVID-19 symptoms;
- has to care for or assist an individual who is under self-quarantine or is subject to a quarantine order for COVID-19; or
- must care for a child if the school or place of care is closed or unavailable due to COVID-19.

Full-time employees may receive up to 80 hours of EPSL. Part-time employees are eligible for a number of hours equal to the number of hours they work, on average, over a two-week
period. Subject to certain maximums, EPSL is paid at the employee’s regular pay for leave taken on the basis of the employee’s own condition. For employees using EPSL to care for an individual or for childcare reasons, EPSL is paid at a rate that is equal to two-thirds of the employee’s regular pay.

Public Health Emergency Leave
An employee who has worked for at least 30 days is eligible for up to 12 weeks of job-protected public health emergency leave (PHEL) if the employee is unable to work (or telework) due to a need to care for a child under 18 years of age if the child’s school or place of care has been closed, or the childcare provider is unavailable, due to a public health emergency.

The first 10 days of PHEL are unpaid, although an employee may elect to substitute another form of available paid leave for those days. The remaining 10 weeks of PHEL will be paid at two-thirds of the employee’s usual pay based on the employee’s regular work schedule, up to $200 per day.

Because we are in the midst of a declared pandemic, the University also is offering our employees who have exhausted all forms of accrued paid leave (sick, personal, vacation, cultural holiday, and compensatory time) and entitlements under the FFCRA, the ability to go into a sick time deficit of up to 10 additional days for illness, to meet self-isolation or quarantine requirements, or for the active care of others because of disruptions related to COVID-19. If you go into a sick time deficit, you will not be able to use any further sick time until the deficit is paid back. UVM reserves the right to recoup any remaining sick time deficit from the final paycheck of employees who terminate before they regain a positive sick time balance. Alternatively, you may request unpaid time off.

No matter what form of paid or unpaid leave you elect, please speak with your supervisor to make them aware of your situation, and get information on how to report your leave use.

Q.10: Can I use leave provided by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act intermittently?

A.10: Emergency paid sick leave under the act must be taken concurrently, and cannot be used intermittently. With a supervisor’s permission and consistent with business needs, expanded FMLA leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to care for children whose schools or daycares have closed may be used intermittently in increments of no less than one day. Example: employee will telework on Tuesdays and Thursdays while their spouse cares for children, but would like to use leave on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Q11: Does my supervisor need to approve my request to telework now that the Governor has issued a “Stay Home/Stay Safe” order?

A11: Employees cannot unilaterally decide to telework. Employees must work with their supervisors to determine if telecommuting is compatible with the employee’s job responsibilities, and if so, to put in place a temporary teleworking arrangement. At this time, all employees who
can do so and who do not perform essential on-campus work should telework, consistent with the Governor’s “Stay Home/Stay Safe” order.

**Q.12: One of my employees disclosed that they are in quarantine due to COVID-19, and/or are being tested. What should I do?**

**A.12:** If the employee has worked on campus in the 14 days before symptoms began, email them a link to the COVID-19 tracking form and ask that they complete it and keep it updated. You should also reach out regularly to the employee to check on them and encourage them to update their status.

If the employee is sick and not able to telework, they may use any form of accrued leave to cover their absence (sick, vacation, personal, cultural holidays, comp time), and effective April 1, they may also take up to two weeks (10 work days) of paid time under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. More information about how to code the time reporting codes in PeopleSoft will be forthcoming [HYPERLINK WHEN AVAILABLE].

If the employee is a presumptive positive case or if they test positive for COVID-19, please contact your labor and employee relations professional at uvmler@uvm.edu for assistance and further instructions. There may be a need to notify other employees who they may have had contact with.

**Q.13: Can I send someone home if they appear to be exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19?**

**A.13:** If an employee is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, fatigue) you should first and foremost ask them if they are okay, and encourage them to go home and contact their healthcare provider if they are sick. Remind them that in addition to their regular leave accruals, they may use up to 10 days of paid sick leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act for time off related to COVID-19 symptoms. If the employee refuses to go home but you believe that their symptoms are consistent with COVID-19, please contact your labor and employee relations professional for assistance at uvmler@uvm.edu or by calling 802-656-3150. Generally, a supervisor can require an ill employee to go home and use sick leave, or in this case, paid sick leave under the FFCRA, if they believe the employee is not well enough to work.

If the employee has worked on campus in the 14 days before symptoms began, email them a link to the COVID-19 tracking form and ask that they complete it and keep it updated. You should also reach out regularly to the employee to check on them and encourage them to update their status.

**Q.14: What is the University’s policy regarding allowing employees to temporarily telework at this time?**

**A.14:** Consistent with the Governor’s “Stay Home/Stay Safe” order, employees whose job responsibilities are compatible with teleworking should be permitted to do so if they do not perform essential on-campus work. This means that supervisors should be flexible about
approving a temporary telework arrangement. For example, telework arrangements may be approved for non-exempt employees as long as supervisors ensure that employees adhere to laws related to tracking hours worked and the payment of overtime. Supervisors should also be flexible and creative in assigning work. If there are assignments that can be shifted from one individual to another whose job normally is not conducive to telework, please do that. Similarly, if there are projects, professional development, trainings, etc., that have been on hold given the press of other business, please resurface those and assign them to employees with capacity to work on them. Examples include:

- Research
- Data entry
- Cleaning up/organizing electronic files and databases
- Working on web sites or improving content for web sites
- Creating plans and schedules for regular activities like professional development, departmental meetings, etc.
- Improving or creating trainings
- Tracking and reporting on issues and best practices important to your college or division

Work can also be assigned across departments where appropriate. Supervisors should ensure that all of their employees complete a Teleworking Agreement. Supervisors retain the ability to terminate the Teleworking Agreement at any time.

**Q15: One of my employees has asked to not wear a facemask when meeting with other people. How do I respond?**

**A15:** For the health and safety of our community, all employees and students are required to wear face coverings upon return to campus whenever they are outside of their private workspaces or residence hall rooms. If an employee requires an accommodation related to a condition, they should work with their supervisor to develop a workable solution and/or contact the ADA Coordinator for guidance. Employees who willfully refuse to wear face covering(s) may be disciplined. Supervisors should contact uvmler@uvm.edu if this is an issue.

**Q16: One of my employees called out sick, but does not have any available paid leave time. What should I do?**

**A16:** Employees exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, or who are subject to a self-quarantine based on CDC or Vermont Department of Health guidance, must not report to work.

Effective April 1, 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provides up to two weeks of paid sick leave (see Answer 9 above).

If an employee has exhausted all forms of accrued paid leave (sick, personal, vacation, cultural holiday, and compensatory time), as well as sick leave entitlements under the FFCRA, UVM will allow them to go into a sick time deficit of up to 10 additional days of paid sick time (see Answer 9 above). Alternatively, UVM will grant unpaid time to an employee who has no accrued leave time but needs time off to self-quarantine or because the employee is experiencing signs of COVID-19.
If the employee has worked on campus in the 14 days before symptoms began, email them a link to the COVID-19 tracking form and ask that they complete it and keep it updated. You should also reach out regularly to the employee to check on them and encourage them to update their status.

Q17: My college or business unit would like to recruit for open positions. Should we continue to actively recruit during this time or put these processes off until things begin to return to normal?
A17:

At this time, searches must have the President’s or Provost’s approval before proceeding. Deans or Vice Presidents who believe that a vacant staff position in their College or Division is essential, or who wish to proceed with a faculty recruitment, should contact the President or Provost as appropriate for permission prior to conducting a search.

For searches that have been approved by the President or Provost, talk with the search committee chair and/or hiring manager about conducting interviews via the university’s “Microsoft Teams” platform to limit unnecessary travel and visits to campus, given Governor Scott’s “Stay Home, Stay Safe” executive order.

Q18: I am scheduled to return to work soon and wonder if there is anything I need to do before I come back?

A: All employees must take the COVID-19 Health and Safety Training (VOSHA training) prior to coming back onto campus. This training is mandatory. More information and access to the training can be found on the UVM Emergency Management website. Once you complete the training module, you must undergo a brief learning assessment that will show your supervisor that you have successfully completed training. Retain a copy of your completion certificate and provide a copy to your supervisor.