

From: [Human Resources](#)
To: [Human Resources](#)
Subject: FW: Telecommuting and Workplace Guidance for COVID-19
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To Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors, and Administrators,
Telecommuting and Workplace Guidance for COVID-19

To ensure University operations continue in an effective manner and that risk of the spread of COVID-19 is mitigated, managers are encouraged to immediately begin developing and implementing telecommuting plans for employees on the Tulsa, Health Sciences Center, and Norman campuses (for Norman, starting March 23 after the current closure ends), subject to the following guidelines.

This temporary measure for COVID-19 will apply to employees on all three campuses through April 3. Circumstances can change, but this protocol will only be in effect as long as is necessary to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on our employees. The situation will be assessed on an ongoing basis and further direction will be provided before the close of the two-week period following the University's Spring Break for the possible continuance of this measure.

Telecommuting is not ideal for the vast majority of positions, and not all employees will be able to perform their duties away from the workplace. However, managers should have those employees who can perform their work at home do so, as long as doing so (1) does not interfere with continued operations of the University and (2) is consistent with the workplace flexibility guidelines and Telecommuting Policy found here: <https://hr.ou.edu/News/Coronavirus-COVID-19-Information>.

Business Continuity

Managers should review their business continuity of operations plans with their teams and consider the following: Who are "essential" personnel and is their contact information current? Are there alternate work facilities that could be used? Will vendors be needed? What equipment and critical software must be available?

Telecommuting

To be eligible to telework, employees must have the tools to do their jobs at their alternate

work locations. Central IT has provided information about remote working resources here: <http://ou.edu/ouit/workanywhere>. Managers may contact their department-level IT teams to help identify resources.

In light of the current circumstances, Telecommuting Work Agreements are not required. Managers should work with their department leadership and HR to implement “work from home” plans until further notice. Hourly employees should manually track their work time and supervisors should enter the time if the employee does not have remote access to the time system. Weekly documentation must be submitted by departments to HR (find details here: <https://hr.ou.edu/News/Coronavirus-COVID-19-Information>).

While we encourage telecommuting, there is some work that simply cannot be done from home. In those instances, managers should:

- establish flexible or rotating work schedules for essential personnel where possible, to reduce the number of people working near one another on a given day;
- implement social distancing practices meant to reduce close contact in the workplace (e.g., maintain a distance of approximately 6 feet from others when possible); and
- consider transitioning all meetings to phone or virtual formats.

Social Distancing

In accordance with CDC guidance, the University is reviewing options to facilitate social distancing. Social distancing includes certain actions that are taken by public health officials to stop or slow the spread of disease. Examples include limiting events and gatherings of people to 10, with the exception of mission critical departmental meetings; changing business processes to allow for less face-to-face interaction (e.g., telecommuting); and implementing measures that minimize physical contact, such as refraining from shaking hands.

As part of our effort to mitigate the risk from COVID-19, we encourage as little physical contact in the workplace as possible. For example, polite nods, smiles, or waves are appropriate substitutions for handshakes.

Only Interim President Harroz or his designee may approve the temporary closure of a work unit. Managers should consult their dean’s or vice president’s office with questions about possible work unit closures.

Responsibilities for Workplace Wellness

It takes effort from everyone to limit the spread of COVID-19. Employees should take Paid Time Off (PTO) and not report to work if they are ill, if they have a fever or COVID-19 symptoms, or if they live with someone who has symptoms. If an employee reports an illness or a fever while at work, the manager may ask them to leave the workplace and take PTO.

To be compliant with University and federal regulations, managers may require employees to follow the screening procedures described here <http://www.ou.edu/coronavirus>, except where clinic operations require other procedures. Managers must not provide medical advice, speculate about an employee’s medical status, ask employees health-related questions, or require submission of medical documentation beyond the approved screening requirements. We encourage managers to support their employees who need to be absent

for health reasons.

Student Employees

Managers are also encouraged to develop and implement telework plans for student employees and graduate assistants where the telework plan supports University operations. While we encourage work from home, there is some work for student employees that simply cannot be done from home, like work in laboratories that cannot be left unattended. Managers should establish flexible schedules for these student employees where possible to reduce the number of people working near one another on a given day.

Questions

This is an evolving situation. The University will continue to monitor CDC guidelines and seek advice from medical and public health professionals. We will adjust our policies as needed. Again, this is a temporary measure for the current crisis, applicable at this time only through April 3, and will only be in effect as long as is necessary to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on our employees. To stay up to date, you can visit OU's COVID-19 FAQ page, which is updated with information as we learn more: <http://www.ou.edu/coronavirus>. Additional questions should be directed to your supervisor, department leadership, and division leadership.

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