

Updated January 5, 2022

Supervisor Checklist

As part of USM's response to COVID-19, employee FAQs are provided below. The University is monitoring the situation closely and reserves the right to alter the arrangements contained in these FAQs as necessary. You are encouraged to check the [University's official COVID-19 website](#) regularly in order to keep up to date with latest information. If you have any queries that are not covered by the FAQs, please contact your supervisor or HR Partner for assistance.

The University does not tolerate any forms of discrimination or harassment and wishes to remind all employees, including student workers, that any such behavior as a result of COVID-19 is not acceptable.

Faculty/Staff

Will I be allowed to miss work for my vaccine appointment?

We ask supervisors to be flexible and employees to be responsible with their time as they make COVID-19 vaccine appointments.

What if I have symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive?

You should not report to work if you have symptoms (refer to [the USM health protocols](#) for more information) or have tested positive. You should report your absence in accordance with your school/unit call-in procedure. Absences due to illness or injury of an employee or member of the employee's immediate family related to COVID-19 should be treated as sick time as described in Employee Handbook policy 6.3 Major Medical Leave. Please contact your supervisor for more information.

What if I am sick but unable to get a doctor's appointment or note?

USM is waiving the requirement to provide a doctor's note for short-term COVID-19 related illnesses during this time. Medical

documentation may be required when requesting longer-term sick leave (more than 2 weeks duration) and other types of FMLA. Please contact your supervisor for more information.

What if I need to take care of a family member who has COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive?

If you have sudden caring responsibilities for a family member, you should report your absence in accordance with your school/unit call-in procedure. Absences due to illness or injury of an employee or member of the employee's immediate family related to COVID-19 should be treated as sick time as described in policy 6.3 "Major Medical Leave" of the Employee Handbook. Please contact your supervisor for more information.

What if my child's daycare or school closes and I have to stay at home?

If you are unable to work due to daycare/school closures, you should report your absence in accordance with your school/unit call-in procedure. Absences due to COVID-19 school closures should be treated as personal time as described in Employee Handbook policy 6.2 Personal Leave. Please contact your supervisor for more information.

Can I work remotely?

USM has ended remote work due to COVID; however, if you have specific circumstance to believe remote work might be a possibility for you, please discuss with your supervisor. Remote work arrangements are to be vetted through the proper chain of command and approved by the Dean or AVP with final approval from the division VP. If the request involves your own health, you can also submit a [request for accommodation](#) through the Office of AA/EEO.

What if I need to self-isolate?

The answer is condition specific. For instance, if you have been exposed to COVID-19, these absences will be treated as sick leave unless you have been approved for remote work. Please refer to the

[USM health protocols](#) for more information on when to self-isolate.

If you are self-isolating out of personal concern, such as due to underlying medical conditions for yourself or a family member, you should contact Human Resources to explore if FMLA or a reasonable accommodation is an option. Otherwise, these absences will be treated as personal leave unless you have made remote working arrangements with your department head or received approval from the Office of AA/EEO for a [reasonable accommodation](#).

If you are returning from international travel, consult CDC guidance on quarantine requirements. If quarantine is required, you should factor that time into your request for leave.

What if I or a family member are at high risk for the virus?

We encourage you to discuss your situation with your supervisor so that they are aware of your circumstances, can support you appropriately, and discuss your personal needs with you as this situation develops. HR will ask supervisors to work with the individual to agree how they are best protected. We will address this compassionately on a case-by-case basis considering individual circumstances and current guidance from healthcare officials. You can also submit a request for accommodation through the Office of AA/EEO.

Do I need to complete FMLA paperwork?

We are not requiring FMLA documentation specifically for short-term COVID-19 symptoms or quarantine. However, if the absence involves hospitalization or more than a 2-week absence, FMLA paperwork should be requested. For other medical conditions unrelated to COVID-19 (such as surgery or pregnancy), our usual FMLA policy will remain in effect.

Can I receive or donate leave for COVID-19 related reasons?

Per Employee Handbook policy 6.13 Donated Leave, the leave must meet the definition of “catastrophic” in order to qualify. Human Resources will respond to requests on a case-by-case basis.

Can I take paid administrative leave?

According to the Governor's Executive Order No. 1495 issued on June 10, 2020, paid administrative leave is no longer available to state employees, effective July 1, 2020. If you have specific concerns about your ability to meet normal work expectations as assigned by your supervisor, please discuss with your supervisor or contact the Office of AA/EEO for further guidance.

Are student workers or other non-benefit eligible employees eligible for any paid time off related to COVID-19?

No, as these employees do not accrue personal and sick leave.

What happened to the special paid leave just for COVID (EPSL and EFMLA)?

Congress expired those leaves as of December 31, 2020; therefore, these leave options are no longer available.

Does the University offer any kind of help with handling COVID related stress?

Yes! All benefit eligible employees and members of their households have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP offers someone to talk to and resources to consult for mental health, legal or financial reasons. You can go online to review webinars, articles and other resources, you can contact them via phone with your questions. You also get 3 free counseling visits- telephonic, online or in-person. And that is 3 free visits per person per issue per year.

To register online, go to [GuidanceResources.com](https://www.GuidanceResources.com) or the app [GuidanceNow](#), and use the Organization Web ID COM589. When it asks for your company name, enter UNIVE and pause and a box should pop up with The University of Southern Mississippi for you to select. Remember, membership also comes with telephonic access to talk to a counselor, financial advisor, or legal advisor: 800-272-7255.

More information about the EAP can be found on the [HR website](#).

Other campus resources include the [Center for Behavioral Health](#) and the [Center for Family Therapy](#). All students of the University have access to [Student Counseling Services](#).

Supervisors

As a leader, what should I be doing for my team?

- Keep up with the alerts the University is posting on the [University's official COVID-19 website](#) and that employees know about this website as well.
- Encourage employees to communicate with you if they have special circumstances or needs so you can support them accordingly as the situation develops.
- Ensure all employees have access to these FAQs.
- Establish lines of communication to update employees on any operational changes within the school/unit.
- Remind employees of the importance of treating all people with respect and address any issues of casual discrimination or harassment as a result of COVID-19.

Should I allow employees to miss work for a vaccine appointment?

We ask supervisors to be flexible and employees to be responsible with their time as they make COVID-19 vaccine appointments.

What should we do if our school/unit is exposed to COVID-19?

Consult the [USM health protocols](#) and contact your [HR Partner](#) for advice and guidance. Moffitt Health Center may also be contacted. You may also consult the [Supervisor Checklist](#).

Can I approve working remotely?

USM has ended remote work due to COVID. However, if there are special circumstances where remote work arrangements are thought to be warranted, requests must be vetted through the proper chain of

command and approved by the Dean or AVP with final approval from the from the division VP. In situations of short-term quarantine for COVID illness or exposure, remote work may be approved by the Department Head without VP approval. Contact your [HR Partner](#) for assistance.

If approved, an [Agreement to Work Remotely](#), which outlines guidelines for remote working arrangements, must be completed, signed and returned to Human Resources for the personnel file. Remote working possibilities will be dependent upon the specific position and school/unit needs and may be denied given the circumstances. Supervisors should also require remote workers to submit a status report of their activities at least weekly, and HR has provided a [Remote Work Log](#) for these purposes. This requirement applies to Graduate Assistants as well. Please discuss with your [HR Partner](#) if you have questions about the forms/guidelines.

What if it is believed someone is abusing this situation?

We very much hope that this isn't the case but if you do have concerns please contact your [HR Partner](#).

What do I do if someone is being harassed for their national origin due to COVID-19?

The University does not tolerate any forms of discrimination and harassment so these instances should be reported and addressed immediately. Please contact your [HR Partner](#) for advice.

Should I require employees to provide FMLA documentation or a doctor's note?

We are not requiring FMLA documentation or doctor's notes specifically for short-term absences related to COVID illness or exposure. However, if the absence involves hospitalization or more than a 2-week absence, FMLA paperwork should be requested. For

other medical conditions (such as surgery or pregnancy), our usual FMLA policy will remain in effect.