



Return to Learn

Employee Expectations for Returning to Work

Latest Update: August 10, 2020

Introduction

Minnesota State University, Mankato is committed to student success. The threat from COVID-19 has forced our University to adapt our services and delivery models to ensure the highest level of safety for our students and staff. As these threats change over time, the University needs to adapt our approach to initiate the potential return of employees to campus.

This Employee Return to Work Strategy is designed to identify the expectations for all employees to ensure lower risk and successful transition of our employees back to campus and deliver the highest level of service to our students.

These expectations are designed to assist University employees to determine if their position qualifies to return to campus, the steps to seek permission to return, and what requirements are expected if employees are working on campus.

The Changing Workplace

In March 2020, Chancellor Malhotra directed that all employees who can work from a remote location would be required to do so. Since then, close to 80% of our employees have telecommuted.

Circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and its impact on workplaces is changing frequently. As the University considers scenarios that include the delivery of face-to-face instruction and direct service to our students, we must adapt our workplace to meet these possible scenarios. This includes the prospect of returning employees back to campus in a measured, lower risk and effective manner.

Returning to Campus – FlexSync Classrooms

This summer, MSU staff are working to boldly transform our campus and learning experience through technology. This is a unique design and approach to instruction that will set us apart in serving our students with face-to-face instruction in a safe way for all students and staff.

FlexSync course delivery allows students to attend the same class in person or remotely via Zoom. This flexibility will be available throughout the semester to meet student needs and preferences, as well as adjust to evolving distancing guidelines due to the current health crisis.

FlexSync will provide reassurance to students that they will be successful in the midst of this health crisis, and reassurance for our staff that we can safely help students learn.

The introduction of FlexSync means face-to-face instruction and direct service to students can return in Fall 2020; which means the University will need some faculty and staff to return to campus.

Who Qualifies to Return to Campus?

The University already has approximately 20% of our staff working on campus (e.g. maintenance workers, IT staff, Residence Life staff, etc.) These employees will be expected to continue working on campus.

With full implementation of FlexSync, the University will phase our transition of staff back to campus with full adherence to CDC guidelines and recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Health.

All University staff will be phased in after receiving guidance from the Minnesota State System Office; and will be based on each department's Return to Learn Department Questionnaire.

Each phase includes the requirement of wearing face coverings; and maintaining social distancing requirements through each phase of returning employees to campus.

The intention is that supervisors will give a reasonable notice period (e.g. two weeks whenever practical) so that affected employees can make the necessary personal arrangements to prepare for the transition. If the situation around the pandemic shifts unexpectedly, supervisors will provide adjusted notice as soon as possible.

PHASE 1. A limited number of employees needed to implement FlexSync course delivery, and a limited number of admissions staff who deal directly with students and their families. This may include some faculty, IT professionals, student workers, and other academic and student support staff. This is anticipated to be in early to mid-July.

PHASE 2. Returning faculty who were not in Phase 1 according to scheduled duty days, all remaining student-facing employees, and staff and student workers required to support them. This is anticipated to be in late July or August.

PHASE 3. All remaining University staff and student workers. This is anticipated to begin sometime after the start of the Fall term; and will continue into the future depending on each department's Return to Learn Questionnaire.

Each department's Return to Learn Questionnaire will guide our transition of employees back to campus. Each department's circumstances are different. However, each position's impact on students will be an important factor in the sequence of returning employees. Employees are encouraged to speak with their supervisor as to how their department's Return to Learn Questionnaire affects their timeline for returning to campus.

It is important to note that if transmission of COVID-19 becomes significant on our campus or other work sites, the University may determine that employees who have transitioned back to campus need to return to telecommuting for a period of time. Changes to an employee's work location due to COVID-19 conditions will be made under the direction and guidance of Minnesota Department of Health.

If an employee who has been directed to return to work on campus has concerns about doing so due to a medical condition or other factors that place them at higher risk, or if employees wish to seek ADA reasonable accommodations related to returning to the workplace, they should contact Human Resources.

The University is committed to being as reasonable as possible to help all our employees return safely to serve our students. Employees who have concerns about returning to campus outside of a medical condition should contact their immediate supervisor to discuss strategies to address their concerns. Faculty should contact their Dean. The supervisor, Human Resources, and University leadership will work with each employee on an individual basis to assess their concerns and explore solutions that meet the needs of the employee, the University, and our students.

Face Coverings

Beginning July 20, 2020, all Minnesota State University, Mankato faculty, staff, students, and visitors will be required to wear a face covering over both the nose and mouth at all times when indoors on campus or in other university facilities, with the following exceptions:

- When alone in a private office.
- When working in an office setting, cubicle, or workstation where physical distancing can be maintained.
- When in an assigned residence hall room or apartment.
- When eating or drinking.
- When alone in a motor vehicle.
- Individuals exercising, training, or practicing in Campus Recreation and Intercollegiate Athletic facilities (both indoor and outdoor) may remove the cloth face covering while under physical exertion or in other situations where wearing a mask compromises their safety and welfare.
- Children 12 and under or anyone unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- When another accommodation is necessary as indicated by a medical expert and granted written permission of the university.
- When an exception for a non-medical reason has been granted by university administration.

Face coverings are also required outdoors on campus if social distancing practices cannot be maintained.

Appropriate Face Coverings

- A cloth or disposable mask that fits snugly but comfortably and covers the mouth and nose and allows for unrestricted breathing
- Other face coverings expressly approved by the university

Face Shields

- Face coverings are preferred over face shields
- Face shields can be used in conjunction with a mask any time the user wishes. Use of both may be necessary for higher risk activities
- Face shields may be used by faculty while conducting lecture in a classroom provided 6-foot distancing can be maintained with students.
- Masks should be worn going to and from the classroom or if the faculty member cannot maintain the 6-foot social distancing.
- Other uses of a face shield in lieu of masks should be for medical reasons only.

Caring for Face Coverings

Cloth masks like those provided to members of the university community must be washed regularly.

Compliance

Members of the university community are expected to behave responsibly and show respect for the health and safety of others. Any employee, student, or visitor who fails to abide by this directive without an approved accommodation may be asked or directed to leave the campus. Faculty and staff who are so directed but fail to comply may be subject to university discipline.

Practicing Kindness

Avoid stigmatization of the wearing or not wearing of face coverings. Some members of the campus community may have an approved accommodation and are thus not subject to this requirement. We encourage patience, kindness, and compassion for others in our community who may be unable to wear a face covering.

Requesting an Accommodation

Faculty and staff who believe they should be considered for an exception to this requirement should contact Human Resources at (507) 389-2015, or hr@mnsu.edu.

Expectations for Supervisors

Supervisors must maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of employee health information. In addition, University supervisors have the following expectations:

- If an employee indicates any of the symptoms outlined in the self-screening, the supervisor must require the employee to stay home, and the employee should seek guidance from their healthcare provider.
- Employees who are directed to stay home under these circumstances may be allowed to telecommute if possible, depending on their position.
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, supervisors should explore the possibility of allowing the employee to telecommute if possible, depending on the position and the employee's physical ability to perform their work.

Supervisors should work with their Human Resources Generalist to ensure these expectations are followed.

Expectations for All Employees

This Return to Work Strategy and all University actions relating to work during the COVID-19 health crisis are based on guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and the University's own experts.

At this time, the Minnesota Department of Health does not recommend mass testing of people who do not exhibit symptoms of COVID-19. However, public health may recommend that people who do not have symptoms get tested in certain situations. These include:

- People who are told by public health workers that they were in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19 or are connected to a setting where an outbreak is occurring; or
- Before certain medical procedures

If you believe you may have COVID-19, contact your primary health care provider. As with any illness, stay at home and report your absence using the standard process for your unit.

Employee Self Screening

- Employees are expected to self-screen for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 daily prior to returning to work. Self-screening signage will be placed at building entrances, as well as all common departmental entrances. In addition, effective August 10, 2020, the University launched a new required COVID-19 screening tool that all faculty, staff, students and visitors are required to use every day prior to coming onto our campus.
- If an employee has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 (like a person in your household), but the employee is not sick, the employee must notify their supervisor and stay home for 14 days. Employees should telecommute during this time if possible.
- If an employee is advised by their healthcare provider to get tested for COVID-19, the employee should stay home and wait the 2-4 days for the test result.
- Employees who test positive for COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and call the Campus Reporting Hotline at (507) 389-2030.
- Employees who seek to return to work after testing positive for COVID-19 must follow directives from their healthcare provider. Employees returning to work must still follow all mask wearing and social distancing guidelines.
- Employees should report their work status to their supervisor as soon as possible, or prior to the start of their next work shift. Employees that need assistance with any applicable leave policies or benefits should contact Human Resources at hr@mnsu.edu, or (507) 389-2015.

In the Workplace

- Staff members must be at least six (6) feet away from each other.
- If a meeting must be in-person, it must be in a large room with attendees at least six (6) feet away from each other and wearing cloth masks.
- Break rooms/lunchrooms should only be utilized for food preparation (while maintaining social distancing). This does not include the University dining center so long as social distancing is practiced. Employees should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to entering and leaving the room.
- Visitors who are not directly related to the employee's or department's work are not allowed.
- Employees who become sick while at work are required to go home.

Good Health Habits

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Whenever possible, keep hand sanitizer available.
- Cover your cough and sneeze.
- Regularly clean all high-touch areas in your workplace.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

Health Information Privacy

The University protects the privacy of our employees' health status and health information through consistent compliance with the Minnesota Data Practices Act.

The Minnesota Department of Health will work with the University to inform employees if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 in the workplace, and the Minnesota Department of Health will require them to self-quarantine for the recommended amount of time. The University will not perform contact tracing unless requested by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Leave Policies

Minnesota State Mankato through Minnesota State and Minnesota Management and Budget has implemented leave policies that promote workers staying at home when they are sick, when household members are sick, or when required by a health care provider to isolate or quarantine themselves or a member of their household.

MMB has initiated a paid COVID-19 administrative leave benefit for the duration of the state emergency as declared by Governor Walz. This benefit provides paid leave to University employees who must be absent from work for reasons related to COVID-19. Information about this leave can be found at [HR/LR Policy # 1440 Paid COVID-19 Leave](#). This information includes references to federal legislation relating to leaves associated with COVID-19.

Sick leave policies are governed by collective bargaining agreements and personnel plans for all University employees. In general, employees should use sick leave in cases of personal illness, exposure to a contagious disease, or illness in the immediate family. Sick leave rules vary by contract, so please consult your agreement for the rules that apply to your position. The contracts can be accessed on the Human Resources website at <http://www.mnsu.edu/hr/bargaining.html>.

The MMB policy on Family and Medical Leave can be found at https://mn.gov/mmb/assets/1409-fmlapolconsolidatedpdf_tcm1059-321994.pdf. In general, eligible employees are entitled to up to twelve (12) weeks of leave each fiscal year for certain family and medical reasons pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), relevant state law, and collective bargaining agreements and plans. Contact Human Resources with any questions about FMLA.

Accommodations for workers with underlying medical conditions or who have household members with underlying health conditions have been implemented. Please consult the paid COVID-19 administrative leave policy referenced above, or the sick leave and FMLA policies described above for more information. Specific questions should be directed to Brian Breck, Assistant Director, Human Resources at Brian.breck@mnsu.edu.

The policy of Minnesota State Mankato is to follow Minnesota Department of Health and local health department guidance and direction on informing workers if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 on campus and requiring them to quarantine for the required amount of time.

Safety in the Workplace

The University is implementing a number of enhancements to reduce opportunities for transmission in the workplace that we can control. In addition, all employees returning to work on campus are expected to comply with the following standards and conduct self-screening daily:

- Modifications to individual offices or workstations are not permitted unless an assessment has been done by Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management.
- Individual preference is not a sufficient justification for approval to modify a workstation.
- Approved modifications will be completed by Facilities Management or vendors under contract with the University.

Handwashing and Sanitizer

Basic infection prevention measures are being implemented at the Minnesota State Mankato campus and additional locations. Employees, students and visitors are instructed to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout the day, but especially at the beginning and end of their time on campus, prior to eating and after using the toilet. All visitors to campus facilities will be strongly encouraged to wash their hands prior to or immediately upon entering a facility. All work and classroom facilities have hand-sanitizer dispensers located in each restroom. Hand sanitizer will also be available through office services (sanitizers must be of greater than 60% alcohol).

Respiratory Etiquette

Employees, students and visitors will be instructed to cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing and to avoid touching their face, in particular their mouth, nose and eyes, with their hands. Employees, students and visitors should dispose of tissues in the trash and wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward. Respiratory etiquette will be demonstrated on posters and supported by making tissues and trash receptacles available in work and classroom places.

Social Distancing

Social distancing is being implemented through the following engineering and administrative controls:

- Employees, students, and visitors are asked to maintain the MDH and CDC recommended physical distancing guidelines between all individuals.
- Employees, students, and visitors should avoid gathering in groups and confined areas, including elevators.
- Employees, students, and visitors should avoid using others' personal protective equipment, phones, computer equipment, desks, cubicles, workstations, offices or other personal work tools and equipment.
- University vehicles will only be signed-out to single occupants and cleaned and disinfected after use.
- Sharing of items is discouraged and individuals are asked to use good hygiene practices and regularly sanitize items that must be shared.
- Classroom, lab and office furniture layouts will be reviewed and modified to increased distance between seating and lab and workstations. The use of barriers may be employed when spacing cannot be increased by other means.

Employees who wish to report concerns or issues may do so by contacting the Provost's Office at provost@mnsu.edu.

Cleaning

Building Services will clean and disinfect campus spaces once per day and restrooms twice per day in accordance with MDH and CDC guidelines. Staffing levels will be adjusted to meet this commitment and include a contingency plan to cover absenteeism due to illness. CDC approved quaternary disinfectant will be applied when sanitizing.

Faculty, staff, students and visitors will be responsible for disinfecting personal workspaces such as computer keyboards, phones, desks, tables and other high touch surfaces. Building Services will provide an initial startup supply of disinfectant wipes, sanitizing spray and paper towels. Once initial supplies are exhausted, departments will have the option to purchase additional supplies through campus stores to be delivered or arranged to be picked-up.

Communications

The most up-to-date version of this Return to Work Strategy will be posted on the Return to Learn website on the University's webpage. Additional communication relating to this Strategy will be ongoing as circumstances surrounding this health crisis require.

Supervisors must monitor how effective the strategy is being implemented by reporting observations and concerns to their Vice President who oversees their department.