

**SPECIAL ISSUE: CORONAVIRUS (COVIC-19)**

**SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

**March 16, 2020**

**Human Resources Guidance on the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency**

The Southern University System's (System) first priority is the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff. The System continues to monitor the current spread of the COVID-19 virus, and the System HR department will provide open, proactive guidance to allow each campus and employee manage this very historical event. The System understands each campus has unique circumstances and aims to provide guidance that is effective and flexible.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT ALL CAMPUSES WILL REMAIN OPEN AND CRITICAL OPERATIONS WILL CONTINUE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.**

**Definitions**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** Leading national public health institute of the United States, under the Department of Health and Human Services.

**Community Spread:** People have been infected, and it is not known how or where they became exposed.

**Commercial Transportation:** A mode of transportation for public conveyance, including but not limited to airplane, bus, train, taxi, ship, or other public transportation.

**Household Member:** Person who resides in the same home.

**Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19):** A new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

**Personal Travel:** Travel which is for personal purposes only and not for University-authorized purposes or paid for at University expense.

**State Employee:** Classified/Unclassified Employees and Faculty

**Student Workers:** graduate assistants, undergraduate and graduate student workers employed by departments. This does not include work study students.

**System Employees:** SU System employees on all five campuses (Southern University Baton Rouge, Southern University at New Orleans, Southern University Shreveport, Southern University Law Center and Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center).

**Warning Level 3 Areas:** Widespread Community Transmission

**China** is experiencing widespread community transmission of respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

**Iran** is experiencing widespread community transmission of respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

**South Korea** is experiencing widespread community transmission of respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

**Europe** is experiencing widespread sustained transmission of respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions may be at increased risk for severe disease.

Travelers should avoid contact with sick people and clean their hands often by washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60%-95% alcohol. Travelers returning from the specified counties must stay home for 14 days after returning from travel, monitor their health and practice social distancing. Travelers that are sick with fever, cough, or have trouble breathing should call ahead before seeking medical care.

**Warning Level 2: Practice Enhanced Precautions** Sustained community spread of respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is occurring globally. Some countries have widespread sustained spread. Older adults and people of any age with serious chronic medical conditions are at increased risk for severe disease and should consider postponing nonessential travel. Travelers should avoid contact with sick people and wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Travelers should monitor their health and limit interactions with others for 14 days after returning from travel. Travelers that are sick with fever, cough, or have trouble breathing should stay home and call ahead before seeking medical care.

### **Travel Guidelines**

**The following travel restrictions apply to all State employees :**

- A. Travel plans by state employees traveling on state business to areas designated as Warning Levels 2, 3, or above by the CDC are to be canceled or postponed. All employees traveling internationally are required to obtain specific authorization from the Commissioner of Administration.
- B. All state employees planning to travel internationally for personal reasons are required to notify their supervisor and Human Resources Department of the travel as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours prior to travel, and immediately upon return to the United States.
- C. All state employees with household members who plan to travel or have traveled to areas designated as Warning Level 2, 3 or above by the CDC are required to notify their supervisor and Human Resources Department of the travel as soon as possible, but not later than 48 hours before the household member's departure. They must state the household member's expected date of return, and notify their supervisor and Human Resources Department immediately upon the household member's actual return to the United States.
- D. All state employees are required to notify their supervisor and Human Resources Department if the employee or a household member develops symptoms associated with COVID-19.

**The following travel restrictions apply to System Employees :**

- A. System employees planning to travel internationally for personal reasons are required to notify their supervisor and Human Resources Department as soon as possible but not later than 48 hours before travel, and immediately upon return to the United States. Once the

system employees returns, the system employee will be required to complete a questionnaire before they can return to work.

B. System Employees with household members planning to travel or have traveled to areas designated as Warning Level 2, 3 or above by the CDC are required to notify Human Resources Department of the travel as soon as possible, but not later than forty-eight 48 hours to the household member's departure. They must state the household member's expected date of return, and notify the Human Resources Department immediately upon the household member's actual return to the United States.

C. System Employees are required to notify their supervisor and Human Resources Department if the employee or a household member develops symptoms associated with COVID-19.

### **Sick Leave, Documentation and Return to Work Protocol for Employees**

**IF YOU ARE SICK, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO STAY HOME UNTIL YOU FEEL BETTER. EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, ALL EMPLOYEES WHO ARE ABSENT FOR TWO (2) DAYS OR MORE WILL BE REQUIRED TO BRING A DOCTOR'S NOTE INDICATING YOU ARE CLEARED TO WORK.**

#### **Employees who are possibly exposed to COVID-19 and showing no symptoms of illness :**

The System President, with guidance from the CDC and Louisiana Department of Health, will designate an incubation period.

Since the employee is ready for duty and has no symptoms, every effort should be made to maintain the employee in an active status by taking the following actions:

- A. Allow the employee to work from home through the designated incubation period, or
- B. Provide time off without loss of pay or loss of leave through the incubation period.
- C. Employees who are required to stay home as a precaution should continually update your campus HR department.
- D. Sick leave status will become appropriate if the employee tests positive with COVID-19 or any other illness.

#### **If an employee is presumptively or confirmed positive with COVID-19:**

- A. The employee shall remain home until the employee is cleared by a medical doctor to return to work.
- B. FMLA leave may be applicable for eligible employees, and the FMLA regulations will govern.

#### **If an employee is visibly sick or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19:**

The supervisor should begin by separating the employee, asking them if they need to leave work. If the employee affirms, the employee will be allowed to leave and placed on sick leave.

If the employee does not comply with the request, the supervisor should consult HR to discuss the employee's condition and behavior. If the employee's response is unchanged, the supervisor should take the following actions until the employee is cleared by a medical doctor to return to work:

- A. Place the employee on compensatory leave, or
- B. Place the employee on annual leave, or
- C. Place the employee on suspension.

HR will work with supervisors to ensure supervisors are taking appropriate action based on the situation. Actions taken by the supervisor should be properly documented and adhere

to campus procedures.

### **Protective Workplace Guidelines**

In an effort to protect the workplace and maintain a safe environment, HR is implementing the protective workplace practices. Campus COVID-19 response plans should include provisions that include protective workplace practices and behaviors. Examples of these practices and behaviors include:

- Maintaining a six-foot minimum personal space.
- Opting to meet by telephone or video conference.
- Working alone in enclosed workspaces.
- Consider teleworking and flexible work arrangements in order to minimize the number of employees on campus.
- Where business allows, encourage employees to use compensatory and annual leave.
- Staying at home when sick.
- Appropriately covering coughs and sneezes.
- Proper hand-washing and sanitizer use.
- Wearing protective gloves.
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces.

### **New Hires, Interviews and New Employee Orientation**

In an effort to protect all System employees, we have implemented the following:

- All new hires will be required to submit a fitness of duty certification from their physician before they will be allowed to start work.
- All employee orientations will be held electronically.
- All new employees will be required to complete a travel questionnaire before you are allowed to work.
- Effective immediately, the System will suspend hiring new employees for at least 30 days. The only exceptions are hires that are deemed critical.

### **Student Workers**

Campus departments who employ student workers need to work with the students to determine work schedules.

### **Payroll**

Payroll will continue as normal until otherwise notified.

### **K-12 School Closure**

- Employees and supervisors must consider issues of safety, confidentiality, disruption of operations, disruption of services, disruption to other employees, appropriateness, and legal liability, as well as sudden emergency, posed by the presence of children in the workplace. Therefore, during the Coronavirus pandemic, System employees are prohibited from bringing minor children on campus during working hours.
- It is managers' and supervisor's responsibility to ensure campus operations are completed in an environment that promotes employee health and safety and minimizes work-related disruptions.

- Employees will not be allowed to have workplace visits from supervised or unsupervised children.
- Supervisors may direct an employee to remove a child from the workplace. If an employee has to take a child home, the manager/supervisors will use their discretion on whether the employee will have to use annual leave
- Employees that do not have childcare arrangements during this period will have to use annual leave. If the employee does not have annual leave the employee will have to use leave without pay. The System does not accept any liability for injuries to children who are on campus in violation of this guidance.

The System is currently developing emergency policies for flex time, late start and telecommuting. As soon as we get more information, we will share the information with you.

Thank you. If you have any questions, please contact your campus HR department.

Resources:

[Coronavirus.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

[CDC Travel Health Notices](#)

[CDC Locations with Confirmed COVID-19 Cases](#)

[CDC COVID-19 Reported Cases in the United States](#)

[CUPA-HR Coronavirus COVID-19 Resources](#)