The University of Minnesota is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all members of our community. Our faculty, staff, and students are our most important assets. Our priority is to enable all to work in the safest place possible, knowing that may vary depending on each employee’s responsibilities and situation. We recognize that the threat from COVID-19 is not over, and it continues to affect our community in different ways, including how, when, and where many of us are able to work.

**Most University employees should continue to work from home.** Governor Tim Walz reinforced this advice for all Minnesotans when he announced May 13, 2020 new executive orders to replace Minnesota’s “Stay at Home” order.

The University has developed this Sunrise Plan (the Plan) to assist University employees in determining if they qualify to work on site, what the steps are to seek permission, and what requirements must be met if employees are working on campus or another University worksite. All University employees share responsibility for implementing the Plan by following its requirements. The goal is to reduce the potential for transmission of COVID-19 on University campuses and in other University-owned or managed facilities, and that requires full cooperation among everyone—leaders, managers and supervisors, and faculty and staff. Only through a cooperative effort can we work to maintain the safety and health of our University community.
The Plan will:

- Assist you in determining if your job duties qualify you to work on site. Importantly, if you can work from home today, this Plan does not pertain to you. Continue working from home until instructed otherwise.
- Inform you about the approval process you must follow to work on site. There are no exceptions; all employees who qualify to work on site must adhere to the requirements of this Plan.
- Assist you by outlining the health and hygiene requirements you must follow if you are approved to work on site.

Who currently qualifies for consideration under this Plan?

Until further notice, the University expects that any faculty or staff who can work from home will continue to do so. The need to limit the number of people on campuses or other work locations to meet social distancing requirements will continue for some time. Administrative units that can effectively work remotely will likely continue to do so until Governor Walz and public health officials ease restrictions on larger gatherings. Their current guidance includes no gatherings that exceed 10 people; smaller gatherings must involve social distancing and other safety precautions.

This Plan (revised May 15, 2020), anticipates that a growing number of faculty and staff may need to return to their respective campus or another University work location (either regularly or intermittently), not because of personal preference, but to effectively complete their work. Some categories of work currently permitted may include:

- Researchers and their supporting staff whose research requires their physical presence to advance research goals or grant requirements;
- Faculty whose work requires their physical presence to complete;
- Extension educators who may require access to offices or other equipment to accomplish their duties; or
- Administrative functions that are not otherwise possible if working from home.
In particular, returning employees should only include:

- Those who do not have public-facing roles;
- Those who would normally engage with students, faculty, staff, or the public, but can work without permitting others into their work space;
- Those who can demonstrate an ability to maintain social distancing, which could include staggered shifts by time or day, relocating some staff, or other solutions;
- Those who may not fit neatly into these categories, but have developed a personalized “sunrise safety plan” unique to their work environment, subject to approval by University Health and Safety.

Employees who were already designated as “Essential On-Campus” employees or those who have been approved to conduct essential research and have been working on site already, can continue to do so without seeking additional approval.

It is important to note that this Plan will evolve as necessary in response to the public health conditions in Minnesota and guidance from Governor Walz, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We fully expect that, over time, the Plan will allow more and more faculty and staff to return to campuses and other University facilities until we achieve full, in-person operations at a date in the future. University leaders will continue to revise this Plan and communicate updates to all faculty and staff systemwide as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves.

It is also important to note that if transmission of the COVID-19 virus becomes significant on our campuses or at other worksites, the University may determine that employees who have received approval must return to a work-from-home scenario.

**Request for Return**
Individual faculty or staff members who meet the criteria above may request a return to their worksite under this Plan. Any requestor must discuss their situation with their supervisor before initiating a request. Requests must be submitted through the Request for Return workflow process and will require two steps of approval, which will be managed through the following routing process:

1. **Research**: needs approvals by unit head and Dean / Associate Vice Chancellor for Research or similar official as communicated by your leader.
2. **Teaching and Outreach**: needs approvals by unit head and Dean or similar official as communicated by your leader.
3. **Administrative Activities**: Vice President / Vice Chancellor or senior leader who oversees your unit or similar official as communicated by your leader.

No member of the University community may return to work on site until they have received the appropriate approval(s) from one of these three processes, and they have acknowledged their personal responsibility to comply with this Plan. Failure to receive approval will result in immediate on site work stoppage.

**Considerations and Expectations for Employees**

An overview of the actions that all on site employees must take is provided by the University’s Office of Academic Clinical Affairs. This overview and the following detailed instructions are based on guidance from MDH, the CDC, and the University’s own medical and public health experts. **If you believe you may have COVID-19, contact your primary health care provider. As with any illness, stay home and report your absence using the standard process for your unit.**

**Employee Self-Screening for those Working On Site**

- Take your temperature in the morning and when you return home from work. Log those results and report any fever to your supervisor.
- Report any exposure to COVID-19 positive individuals, respiratory symptoms, sore throat, or dry cough to your supervisor.
If the employee indicates any of these conditions, the supervisor must require that the employee stay home, and the employee should seek guidance from their healthcare provider.

**In the Workplace**

- Staff members must be at least six feet away from each other.
- **Per CDC guidelines**, employees will wear cloth masks in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- In-person meetings are discouraged. If a meeting must be in-person to accomplish the purpose of the meeting, it must be in a large room with attendees six feet away from each other and wearing cloth masks.
- Break rooms / lunchrooms and gathering areas are closed for gathering. They may still be utilized for food preparation (one at a time, or multiple people if 6-foot social distancing can be maintained). This does not include large residence hall dining areas where social distancing is practiced. Employees should **wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds** prior to entering and after exiting the room.
- Visitors who are not directly related to the individual’s or unit’s work are not allowed.
- Sick employees must stay home.

**Continue Good Health Habits**

- **Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds**. Keep a supply of hand sanitizer (as possible).
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- Clean all high touch areas in your home and workplace.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Consistent with our longstanding compliance with HIPAA and patient privacy, the University protects the privacy of faculty and staff health status and health information. Managers and supervisors are **reminded that they have an obligation to protect the privacy of employee health information.**
The University has leave policies that encourage faculty and staff to stay at home when they are sick, when household members are sick, or when they are required by a healthcare provider to isolate or quarantine themselves or a member of their household. These policies include:

- University [Emergency Leave for COVID-19](#)
- [Pay Provisions During Emergency Closings or Reduced Operations](#)
- [Family Medical Leave Act](#)
- [Family First Coronavirus Response Act Emergency Paid Sick Leave](#) (federal)
- Sick Leave: [Civil Service](#) -- Labor Represented -- [P&A](#)
- Vacation Leave: [Civil Service](#) -- Labor Represented -- [P&A](#) -- [Vacation Donation](#) for Civil Service and Labor Represented employees
- Comp Time: [Civil Service](#) -- Labor Represented
- [Short-Term Disability](#) (if applicable, employee-elected benefit)
- [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 FAQ](#)

For faculty and staff with underlying medical conditions, or who have household members with underlying health conditions, the following policies, resources, and supports are available:

- Board of Regents Policy: [Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action](#).
- Employees should contact their unit HR Lead, who is available to consult with the campus disability resource/service office and/or [UReturn](#) to initiate the University’s process. This process considers accommodation(s) that can be put in place. (It is important to note that telework may no longer fall under the “undue burden” category.)

The University will work with MDH to inform workers if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 in the workplace, and MDH will require them to self-quarantine for the recommended amount of time.

**Individual Circumstances**
The University acknowledges that it is a community of individuals with different abilities and circumstances. If an individual who has been instructed to return to work on site has concerns about doing so due to a medical condition or other factors that place them at a higher risk, or if individuals wish to seek ADA reasonable accommodations related to returning to the workplace, they should contact their HR representative to initiate a review by the campus disability services office, which will work with them to determine any appropriate accommodation(s).

**Safety in the Workplace**

The University has implemented a number of enhancements to reduce opportunities for transmission in areas of our workplaces that we can control. In addition, all employees returning to work on site 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 from University Health and Safety deems health habits and other measures described in this Plan are insufficient to promote a safe work environment.** As with other expectations in this Plan, individual preference is not a sufficient justification for approval. Approved modifications will be completed by facilities management departments or vendors under University-wide contracts.

**Handwashing**

Faculty and staff 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-site, prior to any mealtimes, and after using the toilet. Hand sanitizer dispensers are also available and can be used for hand hygiene in place of soap and water if hands are not visibly soiled.

- [The MDH “Clean Your Hands!” poster](#), located in all restrooms, provides proper hand washing methods.
- In occupied areas, custodial staff are checking and replenishing soap dispensers, paper towels, and hand sanitizer stations at a minimum of once per day, and more often in heavily trafficked public spaces.
Respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze

Everyone is asked 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. Tissues should be disposed of in the trash and individuals should wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward. Respiratory etiquette reminders appear on posters and tissues and trash receptacles are readily available.

- The CDC “Stop the Spread of Germs” poster has been posted in all building lobbies and other common areas. The poster is also displayed on digital boards across our campuses where available.
- Individual departments are responsible for providing tissues in common areas, including reception areas and conference rooms. Tissues are ordered through U Market Services.
- Employees are expected to wear cloth face coverings (masks) in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Individuals may bring their own mask, or campuses/units may order them at no cost from U Market Services (masks are limited to two per employee at no cost).
- University Health and Safety staff are available to provide training on respiratory etiquette for units or individuals who are at a heightened risk of exposure.

Social distancing

Social distancing has been implemented across University campuses and facilities:

- Faculty, staff, and visitors will avoid gathering in groups and in confined areas, including elevators.
- Faculty, staff, and visitors will avoid using anyone else’s personal protective equipment, phones, computer equipment, desks, cubicles, workstations, offices, or other personal work tools and equipment. There are some situations where work tools must be shared. In those situations, employees should take precautions to sanitize them between use, as well as wash their hands before and after use.
- In areas where hoteling workspace is in use, sanitizing wipes will be made available by the individual unit (wipes can be ordered from
Employees are expected to wipe down a hoteling workspace prior to using it and dispose of the wipe in the trash.

- Where workstations do not permit at least six feet between employees, employees will wear cloth masks at all times.
- Common spaces such as break rooms, study spaces, and conference rooms will have furniture rearranged or restacked to promote social distancing. As noted above, break rooms / lunchrooms will be limited to food preparation only. When possible, employees are encouraged to bring meals that do not require refrigeration or heating.

**Housekeeping**

Regular housekeeping practices are being enhanced by the University, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of work surfaces, equipment, tools, and machinery, and areas in the work environment, including restrooms, break rooms, lunchrooms, and meeting rooms. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting will be conducted in high-touch areas, such as controls, door handles, elevator panels, railings, etc.

- All custodial staff and their supervisors have been provided refresher training on proper cleaning techniques, as well as background information on COVID-19.
- All cleaning products meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements.
- If there is a confirmed positive case reported to the University, Environmental Health and Safety will coordinate cleaning and disinfecting of that individual's work space.
- Facilities management teams will clean public spaces such as building lobbies, restrooms, door handles, handrails, and elevator buttons at least once daily, and more frequently if deemed necessary.
- Departmentally owned spaces such as labs will continue to be primarily serviced by the lab occupants, as they had been doing prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. MDH guidelines should inform cleaning frequencies.
- For shared departmental equipment, such as phones, keyboards, and copiers, individual users will be responsible to clean these surfaces prior to individual use. Units can order the necessary cleaning supplies from U Market Services or can call their campus facilities contact.
Communication

The most up-to-date version of this Plan will be posted at the Safe Campus/Public Health Alert webpage. The original and updated versions of the Plan are communicated via systemwide emails from the President, on MyU, in Brief, and through direct communication to campus leaders, HR Leads, and managers/supervisors. Additional communication will be ongoing as circumstances surrounding the pandemic require. Managers and supervisors are to monitor how effective the program has been implemented by reporting observations and concerns to their unit HR Lead. This Plan has been adopted by the President’s Emergency Management Policy Committee and was first distributed to all University faculty and staff systemwide on May 1, 2020 with a primary focus on returning some researchers and faculty. This version was updated on May 15, 2020, and slowly broadens the plan to other faculty and staff, as appropriate. It will be updated, as necessary.

Downloadable Resources

Request for Return form

Guidance for Essential and Returning Employees

MDH “Clean Your Hands!” poster

MDH "When to Return to Work after COVID-19" poster

CDC “Stop the Spread of Germs” poster