COVID-19 RETURN TO ON-SITE WORK GUIDANCE:
Faculty and Staff

THE **UNIVERSITY** OF **NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM**

VERSION 3.0 | **AUGUST 27, 2020**

CONTENTS

THE **UNIVERSITY** OF
NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The UNC System and its constituent institutions are working collectively with employees to provide a safe workplace in light of the public health concerns surrounding COVID-19. Faculty and staff must be protected, trained, and adequately prepared by the University to safely carry out their work assignments. In addition, all members of the University community have a collective responsibility for the health and safety of their fellow community members, including students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Each constituent institution's return-to-on-site operations will be aligned and consistent with guidance from local, state and federal public health authorities, as well as applicable orders and regulations from the governor and relevant federal agencies, such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

At a minimum, each constituent institution is expected to follow the COVID-19 monitoring, containment, and response protocols established and updated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for colleges and universities. These protocols can be found at **https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-ihe-response.html** and https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/considerations.html.

Given the evolving nature of both our understanding of the virus that causes COVID-19 and the recommended guidance from public health and other governmental bodies, please understand that University's guidance may need to be updated periodically to respond to continuing developments.

RETURN TO THE WORKSITE

WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS:

For your safety and those of your colleagues, all UNC System employees are expected to comply fully with the COVID-19-related policies and protocols announced by your home institution with respect to returning to on-site work. **While you may be empowered to make individual choices on personal protective measures outside of the workplace, such measures are <u>not discretionary</u> when the University formally requires them <u>in the workplace</u>. A failure to comply with such measures could result in disciplinary action or other corrective measures.**
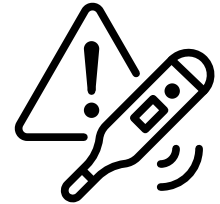
Students, visitors, contractors, and others will also be required to follow all institutional and local health protocols while on site to protect the safety of the entire community.

PHASED RETURN TO ON-SITE OPERATIONS:

The leadership of each constituent institution of the UNC System will make final decisions about who will return to on-site work and when. The UNC System recommends an incremental and phased approach to the return to on-site operations, based on the **State's three-phased reopening plan**. Each institution will take reasonable measures to ensure the health and safety of faculty and staff, as well as the broader University community. Each institution will keep faculty and staff informed of changes to

workplace expectations, the status of the state-wide reopening plan as it applies to the institution, and any related health and safety requirements. Each institution will consider gradually expanding on-site work based on the following factors:

- ability to control and manage conditions in specific work environments;
- feasibility of remote work as opposed to the need to perform essential functions on site at a University worksite;
- need for an employee to access on-site resources, such as equipment or technology;
- individual employee health risks and/or the risks to an employee's immediate family members;
- availability of face coverings, hand sanitizer, and other materials designed to promote hygiene
- availability of any personal protective equipment (PPE) that might be required for some unique positions; and
- COVID-19 testing and monitoring capabilities.

All decisions on return to on-site operations, once approved, will be communicated through the employee's direct supervisor, the institution's HR office, and/or other designated University management.

The need to reduce the number of people on-site to maintain appropriate social distancing requirements will continue for the foreseeable future. Workgroups that can continue to effectively work remotely will likely continue to do so, at least until **Phase 3 of the State's reopening plan** and potentially beyond for certain high-risk individuals (as defined by the **CDC**).

Each institution's return to on-site work measures should consider how faculty and staff would maximize remote instruction and telework, should it become necessary. For those jobs and functions that are not conducive to telework, the institution

should consider how to help employees minimize exposure and contact while they perform essential job requirements, including providing face coverings and related training, as well as any PPE that might be required for some positions.

Specifically, each institution is responsible for determining optimum and reasonable measures to facilitate the return-to-on-site work process. These institutional measures are expected to include:

- Use of face coverings and, in some circumstances, PPE
- Social distancing
- Ongoing facilities cleaning and disinfection
- Reasonable access control for institution visitors other than faculty, staff and students
- COVID-19 symptom screening for faculty, staff, students, and others

For employees, none of these measures is discretionary when required by the institution, unless an employee receives a specific accommodation through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation process.

As on-site staffing increases and operations expand, each institution will closely monitor and assess the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus. Institutions will continuously adapt policies and protocols to mitigate any suspected or confirmed virus spread. **Testing and monitoring will be a critical part of assessing the impact of increased staffing. If localized outbreaks emerge, tighter restrictions and reduced on-site staffing may need to be implemented again, potentially on very short notice.**

The timing and specifics of each phase of expanded on-site work are highly contingent on the progression of COVID-19 within the State of North Carolina and your institution's immediate surrounding area, as well as continued official public health guidance.

Through the end of the **State's Phase 2**, employees who are not currently designated as mandatory on-site employees should continue to work remotely to the extent practicable. Institutions should provide flexibility so that high-risk employees (as defined by the **CDC**), can avoid or limit returning to on-site work during this period. (See **https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html**.) Employees who self-identify as high risk and have concerns about returning to on-site work will be subject to a formal request process instituted by the institution that may include the requirement to provide supporting medical documentation.

Management may require employees whose on-site presence is deemed essential to operations or whose job duties cannot be performed remotely to return to on-site work, if these employees are not categorized as high-risk per CDC guidelines.

Management may also either require and/or permit certain employees to work on-site if they need access to particular equipment, technology, internet connectivity, etc. to perform the essential functions of their job and do not otherwise have such access at their residence.

Guidance for **the State's Phase 3 reopening plan** will depend heavily on specific circumstances present with respect to COVID-19 spread within the State and within each institution's local community at that time. Each constituent institution should continue a gradual and controlled return of employees to on-site operations, as conditions permit.

STAFFING OPTIONS:

As employees gradually begin to return to the worksite, institutions may continue to use any of he following options, as permitted by management, to maintain required social distancing measures and reduce population density within buildings and workspaces.

Remote Work: Those who can work remotely to fulfill a portion or all of their work responsibilities may continue to do so if approved by management. This will reduce the number of individuals on site and the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus. These arrangements, which should be approved by the immediate supervisor, can be done on a full or partial day/week schedule as appropriate.

Alternating Schedules: In order to limit the number of individuals and interactions among those on site, departments should schedule partial staffing on alternating schedules to the extent possible. Such schedules will help enable social distancing, especially in areas with large common workspaces.

Staggered Reporting/Departing: The beginning and end of the workday typically bring many people together at common entry/exit points of buildings. Staggering reporting and departure times by at least 30 minutes, where possible, will reduce traffic in common areas and help meet social distancing requirements.

COVID-19 TESTING AND SYMPTOM MONITORING REQUIREMENT:

If your institution decides to implement a COVID-19 testing/screening program for some or all employees returning to on-site work, you will be provided with notification, training, and detailed information on those procedures. Any such testing/screening program will be conducted in accordance with federal, state, and local

health guidance, including https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/ihe-testing.html and https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/about-covid-19/testing.

In addition to or in lieu of testing, any employee who has been instructed to return to the workplace must conduct symptom monitoring every day before reporting to work. An employee must be free of ANY symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 or have had evaluation and clearance by a licensed healthcare provider to be eligible to report to work. **Employees who have had close contact with a person with symptoms of a diagnosis of COVID-19 should immediately notify their direct supervisor and should not return to on-site work until they have completed a 14-day self-quarantine as recommended by the CDC.**

Each institution will implement measures designed to confirm employee-self screening and/or equip qualified staff to perform testing or screening procedures. At this time, **COVID-19 symptoms** include the following:
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- GI symptoms (e.g, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea)
- New loss of taste or smell

This list of possible symptoms is not comprehensive.

IF SYMPTOMATIC:

If you have any one or more of these symptoms or have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 symptoms or diagnosis, you must follow

your institution's guidelines for reporting and assessment of symptoms and potential COVID-19 testing, which will align with **CDC** and **NCDHHS** guidelines. You should wear a face covering to avoid possibly transmitting the virus to others. You should self-isolate until **CDC guidelines** allow you to return to work. **If you have any concerns that a colleague may be exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please reach out to your direct supervisor.**

According to the **CDC**, individuals with certain underlying conditions may have a higher risk for severe illness due to a COVID-19 infection. Those conditions may include:
- Older adults (aged 65 years and older)
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Asthma (moderate-to-severe)
- Chronic lung disease
- Diabetes
- Serious heart conditions
- Chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis
- Severe obesity
- Being immunocompromised

Employees who have been instructed to return to work on site and have concerns about doing so — whether such employees are high-risk or not — may request a flexible work arrangement from their direct supervisor. If those concerns are related to an underlying health condition, the employee may be entitled to a reasonable accommodation, depending on the employee's particular circumstances.

Prior to returning to the workplace, any employee who has questions or concerns should contact their direct supervisor or the appropriate designated institutional office, such as HR, employee

health, health and safety, etc. Each institution will designate specific points of contact who can address employee matters related to COVID-19 and will communicate the appropriate contact information to faculty and staff.

HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDANCE

PERSONAL SAFETY PRACTICES

When leaving your home, and especially when returning to your workplace, UNC System employees are strongly encouraged to follow the "Know your W's" guidance from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services: **https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/materials-resources/know-your-ws-wear-wait-wash**.

KNOW YOUR W'S
- **Wear** a cloth face covering if you will be with other people
- **Wait** 6 feet apart. Avoid close contact.
- **Wash** your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.

Handwashing: Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash your hands after touching your face.

Coughing/Sneezing Hygiene: If you are in a private setting and are not wearing your face covering, remember to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then throw used tissues in the trash. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Social Distancing: Keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to the COVID-19 virus and slowing its spread. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others when possible, even if you have no symptoms. Social distancing is important for everyone, especially to those who are at higher risk of getting very sick. Employees must follow these social distancing practices:
- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people at all times
- Do not gather in groups of 10 or more
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings
- Minimize opportunities for close contact by limiting sustained exposure (15 minutes or more) or ensuring sufficient social distancing

Face Masks/Cloth Face Coverings: Directives from the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) require that all state employees are expected to wear cloth face coverings at all times while inside agency worksites, unless they are alone in their respective offices or personal spaces. Exceptions may also be made, when authorized by management, for an employee who is unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or when a specific job duty or task does not accommodate the wearing of a face covering.

However, the wearing of a face covering is not subject to individual employee discretion. Refusal to comply with the face covering requirement may be handled as appropriate within the discretion of institutional management, and continued refusal may result in disciplinary action.

In addition to OSHR directives, the UNC System has issued System-wide guidance requiring faculty, staff, and students to wear face coverings in classrooms, lecture halls, and any other instructional areas and campus locations as may be designated by the institutions respectively. Chancellors may adopt policies that modify this requirement to the extent necessary to facilitate teaching and instruction, to accommodate disabilities and medical conditions, and for other reasons deemed necessary.

You may also wear a self-supplied cloth face covering. Cloth face coverings must only be worn for one day at a time and must be properly laundered between each use. Having a week's supply of cloth face coverings can help reduce the need for daily laundering.

Employees whose jobs require the use of PPE, including respirators, will do so in accordance with instructions from supervisors.

TYPE AND INTENDED USE OF FACE COVERINGS/MASKS

TYPE	CLOTH FACE COVERING	DISPOSABLE MASK	MEDICAL-GRADE SURGICAL MASK	N95 RESPIRATOR
Description	• Home-made or commercially manufactured face coverings that are washable and help contain wearer's respiratory emissions	• Commercially manufactured masks that help contain wearer's respiratory emissions	• FDA-approved masks to protect the wearer from large droplets and splashes; helps contains wearer's respiratory emissions	• Provide effective respiratory protection from airborne particles and aerosols; helps contain wearer's respiratory emissions
Intended Use	• Required for campus community use in non-healthcare settings (office spaces, general research/work settings, shops, community areas where 6' social distancing cannot be consistently maintained. Cloth face coverings and disposable masks must be replaced daily. (While likely necessary for ingress and egress, not required when working alone in an office).		• These masks are reserved for healthcare workers and other approved areas with task-specific hazards.	

The chart below discusses various face covering/mask options.

Use and care of face coverings:

Putting on the face covering/disposable mask
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to handling the face covering/disposable mask.
- Ensure the face covering/disposable mask fits over the nose and under the chin.
- Situate the face covering/disposable mask properly with nose wire snug against the nose (where applicable).
- Tie straps behind the head and neck or loop around the ears.
- Throughout the process: Avoid touching the front of the face covering/disposable mask.

Taking off the face covering/disposable mask
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when removing the face covering/disposable mask.
- When removing the face covering/disposable mask, loop your finger into the strap and pull the strap away from the ear, or untie the straps.
- Wash hands immediately after removing.

Care, storage, and laundering
- If the face coverings/disposable masks are not visibly soiled, torn, or saturated, they may be stored between uses in a clean, sealable paper bag or breathable container. Carefully fold face coverings so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself.
- When soiled, cloth face coverings should be **properly laundered**, with regular clothing detergent. Cloth face coverings should be replaced immediately if they are soiled, damaged (e.g. ripped, punctured), or visibly contaminated.
- Disposable masks should be placed in the trash if they are soiled, damaged (e.g., stretched ear loops, torn or punctured material), or difficult to breathe through.

Gloves: Healthcare workers and others in designated areas should use gloves as part of PPE (personal protective equipment), but according to the CDC, gloves are not necessary for general use and do not replace good hand hygiene. Washing your hands often is considered the best practice for common everyday tasks.

Goggles/Face Shields: Staff do not need to wear goggles or face shields as part of general activity on campus. Maintaining good hand hygiene and avoiding touching your face are generally sufficient for non-healthcare environments.

Cleaning/Disinfection: Housekeeping teams will clean office and workspaces based on **CDC guidelines** for disinfection to avoid the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Facilities management groups will also maintain hand-sanitizer stations at major building entrances, elevator stops, and high-traffic areas. Mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and monitoring systems will be assessed and readied prior to reopening of buildings.

Faculty and staff should keep their personal items (e.g., cell phones, other electronics) and personal work and living spaces clean. Building occupants should also wipe down commonly used surfaces before and after use with products that meet the U.S. Environment Protection Agency's (EPA) criteria for use against COVID-19 and are appropriate for the surface. This includes any shared-space location or equipment (e.g. copiers, printers, computers, A/V and other electrical equipment, coffee makers, desks and tables, light switches, doorknobs, etc.). To the extent practicable, avoid sharing electronic devices, books, pens, other learning aids, and any items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.

The institution will also follow NCDHHS **guidelines** for environmental cleaning after a potential exposure to COVID-19 at a worksite.

GUIDANCE FOR SPECIFIC WORKPLACE SCENARIOS

It is our shared responsibility to practice social distancing, cleanliness, hygiene, and other safety measures so that we can contain the spread of COVID-19. Employees must follow all institutional guidance and protocols with respect to a specific worksite. Recommendations are below.

Public Transportation: If you must take public transportation, wear a mask before boarding and avoid touching surfaces with your hands. Upon disembarking, wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers as soon as possible and before removing your mask.

Sharing University Vehicles: Sharing University vehicles is discouraged; if you must share a vehicle, the passenger(s) should sit as far away as possible from the driver and each other. Travel with the windows open or use the vehicle's vents for fresh air circulation. Wear a face covering while in the vehicle. Avoid touching interior surfaces as much as practicable and use gloves, if available. After exiting the vehicle, remove your gloves (if used) and wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers as soon as possible and before removing your face covering.

Working in Office Environments: Employees should follow any institutional measures to physically separate and increase distance between individuals, which may include:
- Visual cues, such as floor decals, colored tape, or signs, that indicate where individuals should stand while waiting in line;
- One-way directional signage for large open workspaces with multiple through-ways to increase distance between individuals moving through the space;
- Designated stairways for up or down traffic if building space allows;

- Modified layouts of seating/desks; and
- Physical barriers or partitions.

No more than one person should be in the same room or office unless the occupants can maintain the required six feet of distancing. Whenever more than one person is in a room, each individual should wear a mask or face covering at all times. A mask or face covering is not required when individuals are working alone in a confined office space (this does not include partitioned work areas in a large open environment).

Masks/face coverings should be worn in reception/receiving areas, in any workplace facility where others are present, including narrow hallways where others travel, and in break rooms, conference rooms, and other meeting locations.

Using Restrooms: Use of restrooms should be limited based on size to ensure at least 6 feet distance between individuals. Wash your hands thoroughly afterward to reduce the potential transmission of the virus.

Using Water Fountains/Dispensers: All water fountains and dispensers will be cleaned and disinfected. Nevertheless, you are encouraged to bring your own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains/dispensers.

Using Elevators: Elevator usage should be limited to one passenger to the extent practicable. Use the stairs whenever possible, especially when descending. Practice social distancing, including when entering and exiting elevators. Face coverings are required while riding in an elevator. Observe all signage, and avoid touching the buttons with your exposed hand/fingers, if possible. If an elevator must be shared, passengers should stand as far away as possible from each other. Wash hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers upon departing the elevator.

Meetings: Convening in groups increases the risk of viral transmission. Where feasible, meetings should be held in whole or part using the extensive range of available online collaboration tools (e.g. Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, telephone, etc.).

In-person meetings are limited to the restrictions of local, state, and federal orders and should not exceed 50 percent of a room's capacity, assuming individuals can still maintain 6 feet of separation for social distancing requirements. All attendees should wear a mask or face covering while sharing space in a common room.

During your time on site, you are encouraged to communicate with your colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, instant message, telephone, or other available technology to minimize face-to-face interactions.

Meals: Before and after eating, you should wash your hands thoroughly to reduce the potential transmission of the virus.

If dining at work, wear your mask or face covering until you are ready to eat and then replace it afterward. Individuals should not sit facing one another. Staff are encouraged to take food back to their office area or eat outside, if this is reasonable for your situation. Disposable food service items (utensils, dishes) should be used if feasible.

Communal food items for sharing (e.g., to celebrate a birthday/retirement/special occasion) may be prohibited. If food is offered for an event, it should be in a pre-packaged box or bag for each individual attendee.

If you are eating in your work environment (break room, office, etc.), maintain 6 feet distance

between you and others. Remove your face covering in order to eat, then put it back on. Wipe surfaces in common areas (tables, refrigerator handles, coffee machines, etc.) after using.

Laboratory Work: Your institution may have specific criteria developed for faculty and staff working in laboratory environments.

Visitors: Limit non-essential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations, especially with individuals who are not from the local geographic area.

Entrances/Exits: Entry to buildings will be regulated and monitored to the extent practicable. Maintaining social distance at this time is the most important courtesy we can extend to our colleagues. At secure access buildings that require an employee ID card/badge for entry, you should not hold or prop open exterior doors for any other person. It is possible that some buildings may be subject to more rigorous access control during the COVID-19 event.

Once you have been instructed to return to the workplace, report to and depart from work through the designated building access and at the designated time to limit the number of people entering and exiting buildings at any one time.

Building occupants are expected to follow signage designed to help manage traffic flow through building entrances, exits, elevator usage, and similar common use areas.

Violation of these guidelines may result in the immediate revocation of building access privileges, as well as potential disciplinary or other corrective action.

Travel: Travel increases the chances of getting infected and spreading COVID-19. Follow any institutional restrictions or limitations on travel to off-site meetings/conferences and travel to and from other worksites at your institution.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Managing COVID-19 and adapting to significant changes can be a stressful experience for everyone and may evoke emotions that are unfamiliar or difficult. Each employee will handle the transition back to the worksite differently. The University is committed to supporting your overall health and well-being during this stressful time. For assistance with any mental or emotional health issues, please remember that your institution's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available. The EAP is an employer-sponsored benefit program that offers support and resources to address personal or work-related challenges and concerns. It is free for you and members of your household and is completely confidential.

Learn more about the EAP and how to contact them on the **UNC System HR website**.

COVID-19 RETURN TO ON-SITE WORK GUIDANCE:
Faculty and Staff

The University of North Carolina • System Office • Chapel Hill, North Carolina

VERSION HISTORY

June 25, 2020 (Version 1.1): Incorporated updated guidance on face coverings from OSHR and additional travel considerations.

July 23, 2020 (Version 2.0): Incorporated new NCDHHS guidance for institutions of higher education, as well as additional testing information and situational workplace guidance.

August 24, 2020 (Version 3.0): Incorporated technical guidance from the Occupational Safety and Health Division, NC Department of Labor, and revised interim guidance for institutions of higher education from NCDHHS.