Entry Guidance for Leaders
Workgroups A & F

This document was created to provide general guidance to supervisors as employees transition back to full-time work on campus. These guidelines are intended to align with and do not supersede existing University policies.

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Introduction

UAB Human Resources is committed to supporting our workforce during the transition back to full-time work on campus. This Guidance is intended to be a resource for Faculty and Staff as UAB transitions back to campus starting May 10, 2021.

UAB is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its employees, and the transition back to full-time work on campus will be informed by state and local laws, as well as guidance from Health Organizations such as the CDC. Some of the authorities informing UAB's transition back to full-time work on campus include **Alabama's Safer at Home Order**, **The City of Birmingham's Face Covering Ordinance and COVID-19 Curfew**, and the CDC's **Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education** and **Guidance for Businesses and Workplaces**.

UAB has published numerous resources for COVID-19 related issues, including **Information and Messages about Coronavirus (COVID-19)** and **UAB's Campus Entry Resources for UAB Employees**, both of which contain valuable information for the UAB community as it prepares to transition back to full-time work on campus.

This Guidance is a supplement to the information and resources linked above, and is intended to provide information about how to apply certain UAB Policies when faced with the unique challenges presented by COVID-19 as UAB's faculty and staff return to campus.

As information about the novel Coronavirus and COVID-19 continues to develop, UAB HR will update this Guidance as needed, and UAB will continue to update the resources related to COVID-19 linked above. Any questions related to this Guidance should be directed to **UAB HR Employee Relations**.

1.   Work Environments

WORKING IN OFFICE ENVIRONMENTS
If employees work in an open environment, be sure to maintain at least appropriate social distance from co-workers. Employees should always wear a face mask or face covering while in a shared work space/room. Departments should assess open work environments and meeting rooms to institute measures to physically separate and establish proper distance between employees, other coworkers, and customers, as deemed appropriate based on current guidelines.

If an employee works in an office, no more than one person should be in the same room unless the required social distancing can be consistently maintained. A mask or face covering is not required if an employee is working alone in a confined office space or cubicle. ***Employees should exercise good judgment and common courtesy to wear a mask/face covering where others are present.*** Masks/face coverings should be worn by any staff in a reception/receiving area. Masks/face coverings should be used when inside any UAB facility where others are present, including walking in narrow hallways where others travel and in break rooms, conference rooms and other meeting locations.

Working Outdoors: Masks/face coverings are not required to be worn by employees while working outdoors, provided they can maintain appropriate distancing from others. Otherwise, mask/face coverings should be worn while outside on campus, such as walking between building or attending an outdoor event.

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

Using Elevators: Please use the stairs whenever possible. If employees are using the elevator, they must wear a mask or face covering. Employees should wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers upon departing the elevator.

Meetings: In person meetings must comply with the UAB social distancing and general health and safety guidelines. Where feasible, meetings may be held in whole or part using the extensive range of available collaboration tools (e.g. Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, telephone, etc.).

Classrooms: Social distancing will be practiced in classrooms and instructional labs. UAB has adopted a model of teaching to accomplish appropriate social distancing. Classrooms and instructional labs should be used only for assigned instructional purposes. Separate guidance will be issued on classroom and instructional lab usage.

Meals: Before and after eating, employees should wash their hands thoroughly to reduce the potential transmission of the virus. If dining on campus, you should wear your mask or face covering until you are ready to eat and then replace it afterward. Employees are allowed to take food back to their office area or eat outside if this is reasonable for their situation. If they are eating in the work environment, employees must continue to follow proper social distancing guidance. When eating in the work area or breakrooms, employees may only remove masks or face covering to eat. Immediately following, employees' masks or face coverings must be put back on. Remind employees to wipe all surfaces, including table, refrigerator handle, coffee machine, etc. after using in common areas.

Meal periods are considered personal time, generally employees are encouraged to leave the immediate work area to eat and relax but this may not be feasible. Meal periods are not considered work time for pay purposes and employees should not perform work related tasks during approved meal periods and breaks. Nonexempt employees must punch (badge) out/in for meal periods.

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES
- A.   **Working Hours Policy**
- B.   **Attendance**
- C.   **Time Tracking and Recordkeeping**
- D.   **Work (Rest) Breaks and Meal Policy**

2.   Work Schedules/Hours

Departments have discretion to set employee work schedules and hours as needed for operations. **UAB's Working Hours Policy** does not prescribe set hours that employees are required to work. In returning to campus, departments can consider modifications to work hours to minimize potential risk of coronavirus infection, including social distancing and sanitation measures.

STAFFING OPTIONS
Once staff members return to work on-site, there are several options departments may consider to maintain required social distancing measures and manage population density within buildings and work spaces.

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 will reduce traffic in common areas to meet social distancing requirements.

Flexible Scheduling: This option allows for flexibility in work scheduling on a limited, non-predetermined basis. On-site work is the primary work status. Flexible scheduling was always available and utilized prior to the pandemic with supervisor approval. Here are examples of flexible scheduling.
- *Flex Example A:* A 12-month faculty member who works mostly on-site but may request to work a few days remotely while working on a grant proposal (during periods when he does not have on-site obligations). Request must be approved.
- *Flex Example B:* A staff member may request to work remote on a day when they have scheduled repairs or delivery at their home. Flexible scheduling is not a replacement for daycare or elder care needs. Additionally, employees are expected to use benefit time when applicable situations arise. (i.e., employee needs to attend a medical appointment, travel, etc.)

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES
- A.   **Working Hours Policy**
- B.   **Attendance**
- C.   **Time Tracking and Recordkeeping**
- D.   **Work (Rest) Breaks and Meal Policy**
- E.   **UAB Faculty Handbook Section on Modified Duties (faculty only)**

3.   Dress Code (including face coverings and PPE)

UAB does not have a University-wide dress code or uniform policy. Departments should follow their regular procedures with respect to uniforms or appropriate attire.

3.1   FACE COVERINGS
The City of Birmingham extended its ordinance requiring face coverings be worn by people in public places through May 24, 2021. Employers within the city limits such as UAB are obligated to ensure its employees comply with the ordinance while it is in place.

Face masks or face coverings must be worn by all staff working on campus when in the presence of others and in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., common work spaces, meeting rooms, etc.). The mask or cloth face covering is not a substitute for social distancing. Cloth face coverings must only be worn for one day at a time, and must be properly laundered before use again. Face masks should be professional in appearance and sporting a UAB-branded mask is an excellent way to show your Blazer spirit while staying safe. **Click here** for more information about purchasing UAB branded face masks.

NOTE: Face shields may be used if an employee has a medical condition that prevents masking or when working with an individual with a hearing impairment. Please contact the AWARE Program to request an accommodation for an employee's own medical condition.

3.2   Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

UAB encourages employees to take any personal safety precautions. Any safety precautions, including use of PPE, however, should not unduly interfere with operational needs. If problems arise from an employee's choice to use PPE or take other safety precautions, leaders should contact their assigned HR Consultant or HR Employee Relations for additional guidance.

4.   Attendance

UAB will continue to follow its **Attendance Policy**. Employees are required to report to work, in uniform if applicable, and be prepared for duty at the beginning of their work period.

Departments have discretion in the implementation of this Policy, however, as long as they are consistent in their application of the Policy. Leaders should be mindful of potential difficulties imposed by COVID-19 and related safety measures which may impact attendance.

- Limited or delayed public or campus transportation
- Limited ability to obtain vehicle service/repairs due to modified business hours
- Delays or difficulties related to closures of schools and childcare facilities

Leaders are advised to be flexible in enforcement of the Attendance Policy, where appropriate. Leaders can contact their assigned HR Consultant or HR Employee Relations for further guidance on enforcement of the Attendance Policy.

Before taking corrective action based on unapproved absences for consecutive shifts, leaders are encouraged to attempt to contact employees, either directly or through an emergency contact, to make certain the employee is not in a position where (s)he is unable to notify the department of being unable to come to work due to illness.

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES
- A.   **Attendance Policy**
- B.   **Discipline Policy**
- C.   **Time Tracking and Recordkeeping**

5.   Mental and Emotional Support

It is critical that all employees take steps to care for their mental and physical wellbeing. The **Employee Assistance and Counseling Center** (EACC) is available to support employees. In addition, EACC is offering telephonic and virtual sessions with an EAP Counselor to help ensure you receive support remotely.

HR has developed a resources webpage designed to help employees and their families navigate the COVID-19 health crisis. Please visit the **Campus Entry Resources for UAB Employees** webpage on the HR website.

RELATED MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS APPS

The BWell UAB app collects UAB services, information and resources about mental health in one central location. The app features separate profiles for students and employees with information geared just for them, including calendar items and services. **uab.edu/app/bwell**

EACC has partnered with myStrength to provide free and confidential access to web and mobile e-learning tools on topics such as stress management, depression, anxiety, chronic pain, parenting, substance use concerns, trauma and more. **go.uab.edu/myStrength**

6.   Childcare and Caregivers

Childcare resources for employees can be found on the **Resources for Employees with Childcare Needs** webpage on the HR website. Employees unable to work due to their own or a family member's COVID-19 illness, or due to their responsibilities as a caregiver, should use available leave balances (e.g. sick leave, vacation, personal holiday, or other accrued leave).

It is important that employees do not bring their children or other family members to work to ensure compliance with safety and risk-reduction measures.

7.   Employee Illness

7.1   SICK EMPLOYEES

Employee Illness and Absences: If an employee is sick at work, they should be sent home. If the employee exhibits potential symptoms of COVID-19, they should be sent home and instructed to contact their healthcare provider and UAB Employee Health immediately.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, managers may ask employees who call in sick whether they are experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19. If an employee reports COVID-19 symptoms, they should be encouraged to contact their own healthcare provider and UAB Employee Health.

If an employee does not report to work when scheduled, managers should follow normal policies and procedures that govern attendance, including the attendance policy and applicable sick and leave policies.

In addition, managers should contact the employee to find out why the employee is absent. If the employee is sick, the manager should ask if the symptoms are among those consistent with COVID-19. If so, the manager should instruct the employee to contact their personal health care provider and UAB Employee Health.

7.2   EMPLOYEES AND FAMILY MEMBERS DIAGNOSED OR EXPOSED TO COVID-19

Employee COVID-related Illness: UAB has provided **health and safety guidance**, including procedures for employees who are symptomatic, have tested positive for COVID, or have been exposed to COVID. Please note that vaccinated employees exposed to COVID are no longer required to quarantine if they are asymptomatic. For questions that are not covered by existing guidance, or for questions about interpreting or applying the guidance, please contact Employee Health or HR Employee Relations.

In addition to the linked guidance, please be advised that no one should ask employees to disclose their personal health information, or question employees about personal matters in an effort to figure out if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or require employees to disclose vaccination status. Supervisors should not permit interoffice conversations about perceived health issues of co-workers or other personal information related to COVID-19. Please handle any issues related to diagnoses or exposure to COVID-19 privately, and disclose information on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with UAB's HIPAA policies.

Family Member COVID-related Illness: Employees living with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 should contact their supervisor prior to coming to work. The supervisor should tell the employee to contact Employee Health to ensure they are aware and are following safety guidelines.

Employee requests for time off to care for a sick family member in their household should be handled under the usual policies. This will include coordination with Employee Health if an employee needs a leave of absence.

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES:
    A.   **Faculty and Staff Health & Safety Guidance**
    B.   **Campus Entry Resources for Managers**
    C.   **HIPAA Core Policy: Use & Disclosure of Health Information**
    D.   **EEOC Guidance on Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace**

8.   Accommodations under the ADA

8.1   ACCOMMODATIONS FOR AN EMPLOYEE'S MEDICAL CONDITION.

When an employee makes a work accommodation request based on their own medical condition, leaders may contact the **UAB AWARE Program**.* The HR Consultant assigned to your area or Employee Relations can provide additional guidance regarding reasonable accommodations.

If an employee requests an accommodation, leaders should explore whether there is a work accommodation that allows the employee to continue working.

Considerations for reasonable work accommodations include:
- Change in work hours
- Staggered scheduling
- Flexible scheduling
- Change in the way job duties are performed

Employees may request an accommodation for an exemption or modification of guidelines related to face-coverings or other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Pregnant employees should be following infection prevention guidelines (e.g., handwashing, social distancing, etc.). If employees have medical needs related to pregnancy, they should be referred to Employee Health and the **UAB HR Leave of Absence** website.

If leaders need additional guidance or help identifying appropriate accommodations, contact the UAB AWARE Program at **HRAWARE@uab.edu** or 205-975-9973.

Generally, fear of contracting COVID-19 is not recognized as a valid reason for a work accommodation. However, an employee may state that their concern about contracting COVID-19 exacerbates an existing disability, in which case an accommodation may be appropriate.

The AWARE program provides disability-management services when an employee's job is affected by a physical, mental, or emotional impairment. In addition, the AWARE Program coordinates requests for reasonable accommodations.

8.2   ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CHILDCARE AND CAREGIVERS.

Requests for non-disability related reasonable accommodations such as childcare needs, general requests to work remotely or serving as a caregiver for someone with a disability or COVID high-risk factor should be reviewed and addressed within the department/school level. Guidance for addressing non-medical/non-disability workplace accommodations can be found **here**.

You may also review the **AWARE FAQs** for additional information regarding workplace accommodations.

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES
A.   **Equal Employment and Discriminatory Harassment Policy**
B.   **Hiring Individuals with Disabilities**
C.   **Leave Without Pay**
D.   **Faculty Handbook 4.5.5 — Modified Duties**
E.   **EEOC Guidance on Pandemic Preparedness and the ADA**
F.   **AWARE (Always Working to Advocate, Retain & Employ)**
G.   **Employee Health**

9.   Leave (including FMLA, Sick and Vacation)

Employees can request leave under UAB's regular leave policies, including the **Family and Medical Leave of Absence Policy**, **Sick Time** and **Vacation** policies. Leaders should be mindful, however, of the fact that employees may be more cautious than usual in coming to work if they feel sick and physicians may be busier than usual. Accordingly, leaders are advised to be flexible in requiring physician's statements supporting an employee's use of sick time.

Faculty (including those with nine-month appointments) are reminded that the **UAB Faculty Handbook** addresses the following leave issues in Section 4: Holidays, Vacation, Sick Time, Sabbatical, and Personal Leave. The Faculty Handbook also addresses Modified Duties in **Section 4.5.5**.

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES
- A.   **Family and Medical Leave of Absence Policy**
- B.   **Sick Time**
- C.   **Vacation**
- D.   **Attendance Policy**
- E.   **UAB Faculty Handbook & Policies**

10.   Performance Evaluations/Management

Faculty and staff should follow their regular performance evaluation and/or performance management procedures. To comply with social distancing requirements and otherwise reduce risks related to COVID-19, however, performance management meetings can be held via videoconference. For assistance in managing productivity, leaders may continue to use the **Activity Progress Tracking Tool**.

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES
- A.   **Performance Evaluations**
- B.   **Activity Progress Tracking Tool**
- C.   **Activity Progress Tracking Guidelines**
- D.   **UAB Faculty Handbook & Policies**

11.   Hiring

In March 2020, UAB implemented temporary hiring restrictions which now apply to faculty and staff new and part-time positions (non-grant funded). For positions that are critical to business operations departments can request an exception to the hiring suspension via the PAR/CRF. For information regarding permissible and impermissible health-related questions and/or health screenings for positions hired, please contact an HR Consultant, HR Employee Relations, and/or Employee Health.

- Submit a **Hiring Suspension Exception Request** (PAR/CRF)
- View the **Hiring Suspension Exception Request Rationale Form** (must be uploaded with all PAR/CRF requests)

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES
- A.   **Promotions and Transfers**
- B.   **Faculty Promotion and Tenure**
- C.   **EEOC Guidance on Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace**

12. Travel

Visit the **UAB United** website for the latest information regarding essential and non-essential travel.

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES
- A.   **Travel Policy**

13. UAB Equipment

UAB equipment utilized while telecommuting during Limited/Modified Business Operations must be inspected and returned to the appropriate UAB Department/Unit.

14. Visitors/Guests

UAB has published a **Campus Visitor Protocol**. Departments are encouraged to communicate UAB's COVID-19 management practices to vendors, regular visitors and guests. This may include that no person enters buildings for non-essential purposes as well explaining that while on-site all visitors must follow required masking/face covering, social distancing and sanitation procedures.

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES:
- A.   **Campus Visitor Protocol**

15. Discipline

UAB will continue to follow its **Policy on Discipline**. While employees are expected to follow all workplace rules, and should be held accountable if they do not, UAB HR advises that when considering disciplinary action, management should be mindful of difficulties imposed by COVID-19 and related safety measures. These potential difficulties include those listed in the Attendance section, as well as issues arising from the use of face coverings or adherence to social distancing or sanitation requirements.

Leaders should contact an HR Consultant or HR Employee Relations with any questions related to discipline during the transition back to full-time work on campus.

RELATED UAB POLICIES AND OTHER RESOURCES:
- A.   **Discipline Policy**
- B.   **Disciplinary Documentation**
- C.   **Termination of Employment**
- D.   **Termination of Employment of Tenured Faculty**

16. Non-Compliance with Health and Safety Guidelines

Each member of the UAB community must be personally responsible for general health and safety monitoring and act to facilitate and maintain compliance with established guidelines. To sustain a culture of safety, there must be vigilance, monitoring, effective structures for reporting concerns, and appropriate corrective action for non-compliance.

16.1   REPORTING
Prompt sharing of good faith concerns directly with the parties involved at the time is encouraged so that such concerns can be addressed immediately.

If someone suspects that an employee is reporting to work sick, they should notify their supervisor. In evaluating if an employee is sick while at work, supervisors can ask some limited questions about whether the employee has symptoms of illness ("Are you sick?" "Do you have a fever?" "How are you feeling?"), but managers should not inquire about an employee's underlying vaccination status or medical condition, if any. Contact HR to discuss ways to address these concerns.

If someone observes that a department is not enforcing the health and safety rules appropriately or fairly, they may discuss their concerns with their supervisor. For guidance on addressing concerns, please contact Human Resources or the Office of the University Ombudsperson. If you are unable to resolve your concerns with your supervisor, you may submit your complaint in writing to one of the following, as appropriate:

Staff and Faculty
- HR Consultant
- HR Employee Relations
- Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer
- Office of the Provost
- Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Office of Compliance & Risk Assurance
- Title IX Office (for complains involving sex-based discrimination)

Anonymous reporting through the **UAB Ethics Hotline** is available for all UAB community members.

Trainees
All trainees also have Program Directors and an appropriate reporting structure to whom they can share their concerns.

16.2   PROGRESSIVE STEPS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE

When identified, failure to adhere to established guidelines should be reported to supervisors. Reported concerns will be reviewed to understand the circumstances and identify the actions necessary to correct non-compliance and prevent it from recurring. In partnership with HR, supervisors should take the appropriate corrective action with the individuals involved. Consequences for failure to adhere to health and safety guidelines are commensurate with the gravity of the behavior and underlying root causes and typically follow a progressive approach as outlined in the UAB Progressive Discipline Policy (HR Policy 603). Persistent failure or willful disregard for health and safety guidelines will result in more serious consequences including but not limited to, written counsel, administrative leave, and/or termination of employment.

16.3   PROHIBITION AGAINST RETALIATION

Retaliation against an individual who, in good faith, complains about or participates in an investigation of an allegation of discrimination or harassment is prohibited. Any individual who feels he or she has been retaliated against, or has been threatened with retaliation, should report that allegation immediately to the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer or the Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. See also **UAB's Duty to Report and Nonretaliation Policy**.