



COVID-19 WORKPLACE GUIDANCE: Faculty and Staff



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

VERSION 5.0

SEPTEMBER 2, 2021

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----------|
| GUIDING PRINCIPLES | 1 |
| AT THE WORKSITE | 1 |
| • Workplace Expectations..... | 1 |
| • On-Site Operations: Get Vaccinated or Get Tested Regularly | 1 |
| • COVID-19 Testing and Monitoring/ Reporting Requirement | 2 |
| • If Symptomatic..... | 3 |
| HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDANCE | 4 |
| • Personal Safety Practices..... | 4 |
| • Guidance for Specific Workplace Scenarios..... | 5 |
| • Mental and Emotional Well-being..... | 6 |



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The UNC System and its constituent institutions are working collectively with employees to provide a safe workplace considering the continuing public health concerns surrounding COVID-19. Faculty and staff must be able to safely carry out their work assignments and must be vaccinated or tested regularly. Chancellors have the authority to implement operational strategies consistent with System Office guidance that best meet the unique circumstances and local community conditions of each campus. 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 on-site operations will be aligned and consistent with guidance from UNC System, 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). This guidance is for both mandatory and non-mandatory employees working in non-healthcare environments.

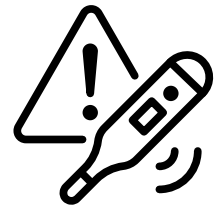
At a minimum, each constituent institution is expected to follow the COVID-19 monitoring, containment, and response protocols established and updated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for colleges and universities. These protocols can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-ihe-response.html>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

Given the evolving nature of the virus that causes COVID-19 and its variants, as well as the recommended guidance from public health and other governmental bodies, please understand that University guidance may need to be updated periodically to respond to continuing developments.

AT 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 on-site work.



While you may be empowered to make individual choices on personal protective measures outside of the workplace, such measures are not discretionary when the University formally requires them in the workplace. A failure to comply with such measures, or providing erroneous or misleading information, 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.

ON-SITE OPERATIONS: GET VACCINATED OR GET TESTED REGULARLY

The leadership of each constituent institution of the UNC System is authorized to make final decisions about who will work on-site.

Based on recommendations from public health officials, getting vaccinated is the most effective way to prevent serious illness and slow community spread. Chancellors should exercise their administrative authority over personnel at their institutions by putting a “get vaccinated or get tested regularly” measure in place for their faculty and staff.

Each institution will continue to closely monitor and assess the potential spread of COVID-19, including virus variants. As the situation evolves, institutions may need to adapt existing policies and protocols to mitigate virus spread. If

localized outbreaks emerge, tighter restrictions and reduced staffing may need to be implemented again, potentially on very short notice.

Vaccines are free and widely available throughout North Carolina. Visit the national vaccine finder website at <https://www.vaccines.gov/> for vaccine availability. Remember that you can use paid work time to receive a COVID-19 vaccination during regular work hours, and that Paid Administrative Leave is available in case of adverse vaccine reactions on the same day or day after vaccination.

For employees, no measure is discretionary when required by the institution, unless an employee receives a specific accommodation through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation process.

Each institution will closely monitor and assess the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus. Institutions may need to continuously adapt policies and protocols to mitigate any suspected

or confirmed virus spread. **Vaccinations, testing, and monitoring are a critical part of assessing the impact of the virus.**

Institutions should consider flexibility for employees at increased risk (as defined by the CDC). (See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>.)

Management may require employees whose on-site presence is deemed essential to operations or whose job duties cannot be performed remotely to work on-site.

“I think it’s reasonable, both for public health and for leadership by example, to ask our faculty and staff to comply with the same protective measures we are asking of our students.”

— President Peter Hans
August 4, 2021

If chancellors determine that it is necessary to reduce population density within University buildings and workspaces, they may draw on a variety of approaches at their discretion including remote work, alternating work schedules, or staggered employee reporting and departure times.

COVID-19 TESTING AND MONITORING/REPORTING REQUIREMENT:

You will be provided with notification and detailed information on the institution’s “get vaccinated or get tested regularly” procedures. All programs 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>.

If a person with COVID-19 was in the workplace while infectious, institutions/units will follow all protocols based on the individual’s vaccination status and coordinate with local health officials

to notify students, faculty, and staff who have been identified through contact tracing as a close contact, while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, NCGS 130A-143, and other state and federal laws. Continue to follow CDC guidance on isolation and quarantine protocols, including CDC guidance that recommends exempting fully vaccinated individuals from isolation.

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 must follow campus directives regarding reporting and health protocols.**

Each institution will implement measures designed to confirm employee-self screening. 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 self-isolate until directed to return to work by your personal healthcare provider, the local health department, or campus testing authorities. 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 an increased risk for severe illness due to a COVID-19 infection. Those conditions may include:

- Older adults
- People with any of the following medical conditions:
 - Cancer
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Chronic lung diseases, including COPD, asthma, interstitial lung disease, cystic fibrosis, and pulmonary hypertension
 - Dementia or other neurological conditions
 - Diabetes
 - Down syndrome
 - Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies, or hypertension
 - HIV infection
 - Immunocompromised state
 - Liver disease
 - Obesity
 - Pregnancy
 - Sickle cell disease or thalassemia
 - Smoking
 - Organ or blood stem cell transplant
 - Stroke or cerebrovascular disease
 - Substance use disorder

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 in your workplace, UNC System employees should follow all appropriate safety protocols and practices as directed by campus leadership, NCDHHS, and/or the CDC.

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.



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. Employees should follow all protocols for social distancing in the workplace,

including any limitations on indoor gatherings and minimizing opportunities for close contact.

Face Masks/Cloth Face Coverings: Because of the unique circumstances of each institution, chancellors will adopt face covering protocols that reflect local health conditions and best meet the needs of each campus. Of course, where applicable, campuses must continue to comply with face covering protocols required by Executive Orders, OSHA, standards for health care settings, standards for clinical and laboratory settings, and other similar requirements.

Exceptions may 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 if required by the institution. 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.

Chancellors may adopt policies that modify institution-level requirements to the extent necessary to facilitate teaching and instruction, to accommodate disabilities and medical conditions, and for other reasons deemed necessary.

You may wear a self-supplied cloth face covering, as long as it does not interfere with the completion of your work duties, is in good taste, and does not include a design, graphic, or logo that presents an unprofessional image and/or would not be acceptable to the general public.

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

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: Face shields are not an acceptable substitute for cloth face coverings. Face shields may be used in addition to cloth face coverings. Individuals who are unable to wear cloth face coverings for medical reasons may request an accommodation.

Cleaning/Disinfection: Housekeeping teams will clean office and workspaces based on [CDC guidelines](#) for disinfection to avoid the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Faculty and staff should keep their personal items (e.g., cell phones, other electronics) and personal work and living spaces clean. 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 and its variants. 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: State vehicles are considered shared spaces, so it is critical that you clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in vehicles before and after each use.

Working in Office Environments: Employees should follow any institutional measures to physically separate and increase distance between individuals.

Employees should also follow all institutional requirements for physical distancing and mask wearing in public spaces and private offices. Whenever more than one person is in a room, each individual should follow the institution's face covering requirements.

Meetings: 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 should be conducted in accordance with restrictions of local, state, and federal orders, if any.

Communicate with your colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, instant message, telephone, or other available technology to minimize face-to-face interactions.

Meals: Follow all institution-level requirements for mask-wearing and gathering during meal times. Communal food items for sharing (e.g., to celebrate a birthday/retirement/special occasion) may be limited or prohibited.

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

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

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.

February 3, 2021 (Version 4.0): Incorporated technical updates and guidance from NCDHHS.

September 2, 2021 (Version 5.0): Incorporated vaccination status updates and other guidance updates from OSHR, NCDHHS, and the UNC System.