General Guidelines for Returning to Campus

Beginning May 4, supervisors are invited to work with their teams to begin the process of bringing faculty and staff back to campus, as appropriate. Given the tremendous variability in operations between UTHealth’s six schools and numerous departments, managers have flexibility in how and when their personnel return to on-campus work. The guiding principle behind this process is protecting the health and safety of our workforce, and our Human Resources - Employee Relations, Facilities, and Environmental Health and Safety teams are here to assist you with this transition.

We ask that you utilize the following guidelines and resources in your planning:

Manager guidelines and resources

- Have flexibility and, as appropriate for your department, encourage employees to continue working remotely. Anyone with an underlying health condition that places them at higher risk for severe COVID-19 infection should continue working from home.
- For those returning to campus, make arrangements to ensure that reasonable social distancing between employees can be maintained. Depending upon job duties and department functions, this may include flexible schedules or staggered shifts to minimize the number of people who can safely gather in shared workspaces.
- Ensure signage is present on all building entrances regarding COVID-19 protocols (e.g. masks encouraged, do not enter if symptomatic).
- Communicate expectations regarding masking—a face mask in encouraged when entering non-clinical UTHealth facilities, and required in all clinical facilities.
- Host meetings and events virtually whenever possible. When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces continuing to maintain a distance of six feet apart.
- Ensure the availability of disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, and masks for your employees, and encourage frequent handwashing.
- Work with Human Resources - Employee Relations, Facilities, and Environmental Health and Safety if you need any support to develop plans for creating a safe, productive work environment.

Employee guidelines and resources

- Take your temperature before arriving at your worksite each day.
- If you have any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19, including fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills/shaking, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, or other signs of illness, for your own safety and the protection of your colleagues, you should not report to work. Contact Employee Health Services at 713-500-3267 or the COVID-19 line at 713-500-2683 for an assessment and, as clinically indicated, testing for COVID-19.
- If you are contacted by a state or local contact tracer because you have potentially been exposed to someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19, please answer their questions, then immediately notify Employee Health Services at 713-500-3267 or the COVID-19 line at 713-500-2683 for further instructions and guidance.
- If you work in a shared office setting, you are encouraged to wear your own cloth mask or face covering as appropriate. If you do not have a mask, UTHealth will provide one. Personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided to anyone working in clinical and research settings.
• Adhere to standard hygiene practices such as frequent handwashing or use of alcohol hand sanitizer, cleaning/disinfection of high touch surfaces, avoid physical contact with others (e.g., no handshaking, etc.), maintain social distancing etiquette, and be alert to any signs or symptoms or other risk factors (e.g., close contact with possible COVID-19 source).

• All employees are invited to participate in an anonymous UTHealth survey, designed to assess the needs of our workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey, which should take no more than 20 minutes to complete, can be found here.

• UTHealth is now offering COVID-19 antibody testing to all employees at no cost. The testing is voluntary and is part of a research study designed to determine the prevalence of the virus among our workforce. If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the study, please email uthealthservices@uth.tmc.edu.

• The UTHealth COVID-19 Resources page has information on where to find child care, how to handle stress and anxiety, teleworking resources, and parking information, as well as aid for students. We encourage community members to visit this page frequently for updates and to submit any questions they may have.

Returning to campus following a positive COVID-19 test

• If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you must be cleared by Employee Health Services prior to returning to campus. This process for includes:
  o A minimum of five days have elapsed since the onset of symptoms.
  o You should be without fever for at least 72 hours.
  o You should be asymptomatic for at least 72 hours (or markedly improved).
  o Once (1) through (3) are achieved, you will be scheduled for return to campus testing, which consists of two nasal swabs, separated by at least 24 hours (it is preferable to wait 48 hours, so that the result of the first swab is available before proceeding with the second swab, to avoid unnecessary testing). Both swabs have to be negative. If either is positive, you will need to wait another three days before retesting.

University guidelines, information and resources

• A series of intensive cleaning and disinfection efforts are being undertaken within our facilities for everyone’s health and safety, with special emphasis being placed on high touch surfaces such as door handles, handrails, elevator and the like. These intensive cleaning efforts will be ongoing and local supplies will be provided to assist in maintaining local work area hygiene. Hand sanitizer stations have also been installed in common areas of all UTHealth buildings. If you notice one is empty, please email the Fixit line at Fixit@uth.tmc.edu. If your department needs cleaning materials contact Procurement Services.

• Travel restrictions. The previously issued travel restrictions and requirements regarding return from travel remain in place.
Department Checklist for Returning to Campus

☐ Workforce assessment. Determine if some or all team members can/should continue working from home. Some employees may have apprehension about returning to campus, the Employee Relations team can help you address these issues and concerns. Reminder: anyone with an underlying health condition that places them at higher risk for severe COVID-19 infection should continue working from home.

☐ Space assessment for your department’s work area. Will the physical configuration of your workspace allow for safety and social distancing? If not, can the space be reconfigured (for example, by removing chairs or marking off areas in common spaces to ensure people remain six feet apart)? And/or are staggered shifts, or rotating on- and off-site workers or workteams, a viable option for your department? Human Resources - Employee Relations, Facilities, and Environmental Health and Safety are available to assist with the implementation of social distancing practices.

☐ Space assessment for your building. Are signs posted at all building entries regarding COVID-19 guidelines, including masking (encouraged in non-clinical facilities, required in clinical facilities), and not entering the building if you are symptomatic? Other considerations for your building may include social distancing measures in elevators and food service facilities.

☐ Safety and sanitizing supplies. Are hand sanitizers, disinfecting wipes and masks available for your employees either in your workspace or at the guard desk at your building’s entry?

☐ Setting expectations. Communicate with your team regarding all return to campus protocols and resources, including:
  - Adhering to self-monitoring and good hygiene practices
  - Not reporting to work if they are ill or symptomatic, and contacting Employee Health Services at 713-500-3267 or the COVID-19 line at 713-500-2683 for an assessment
  - What to do if they are contacted by a state or local contact tracer because they have potentially been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19
  - Masking (encouraged in non-clinical facilities, required in clinical facilities)
  - Increased cleaning and sanitizing efforts undertaken in all UTHealth facilities to maximize safety
  - Current travel restrictions and protocols
  - Availability of COVID-19 antibody testing for employees
  - Participating in the UTHealth employee wellness survey
  - Regularly visiting the UTHealth COVID-19 Resources page for university updates and information on where to find child care, how to handle stress and anxiety, teleworking resources, parking information, etc.