



Guidance for Supervisors – Returning Employees to Campus

What can supervisors begin to do now:

NMU has developed a phased return-to-campus plan. Supervisors will establish a plan with staff to allow the density of employees working on campus to gradually increase over time. Return-to-campus plans must be developed in accordance with the NMU COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. Read the Assessing and Mitigating Levels of Exposure Risk section of the Plan, request a hazard review of the physical space where your employees work, and contact a Logistics Team/work group contact person when there is a specific question or concern.

Reach out to direct reports to begin conversations about returning to campus or your department plans for ramping up operations for those employees who have continued to work through the summer. Ask how the employee is doing and begin to discuss whether they have any questions or concerns. Share with them that NMU is planning for a phased return and it will remain to be seen how long that process will take. This allows employees who have been working remotely to share their concerns about coming back.

Key supervisor responsibilities are identified, but are not limited, to the following:

Supervisors SHOULD:

- **Plan now** for any unexpected absences or medical accommodations that have been communicated from Human Resources. Consider remote work options; have a plan if someone is out to cover the office, provide customer service or complete time-sensitive projects; consider cross-training opportunities to ensure continuation of departmental services; and have a protocol for requesting access to password-protected folders and files and locked locations. Consult with Renee Sheen, Assistant Director of Human Resources, at 227-2331 if there will be long-term changes to a staff member's job duties as a result.
- Lead by demonstrating recommended safety protocols and communicate safety protocols to employees. Remind employees about daily sanitation protocols. Work with employees to develop expectations about shared equipment, tools and the use of common spaces. Resolve any concerns before standard operations resume.
- Remind employees about face covering and social distancing requirements.
- Ensure work areas have been appropriately marked with capacity notices (e.g. how many people in a break room, a conference room, etc.)
- Discourage interoffice conversations that include negative comments about colleagues that need to work remotely as part of an accommodation or need to self-quarantine. Discourage employees from blaming employees who may be infected, assuming someone has COVID-19 just because they may have been exposed to the virus, or disclosing the personal health status and medical conditions of others.
- Explain to employees that the guidelines to request leave and/or apply for a leave absence still apply by contacting Kimberly Hongisto, Human Resources Benefits Assistant, at 227-2470 or Kristen Bjerne, Director of Benefits, at 227-1030.
- Maintain any information in connection with an employee request for leave based upon a medical condition confidential in compliance with HIPAA requirements, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Refer to the [NMU COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan](#) for more information.

Some anticipated concerns and guidance for supervisors on those issues are outlined below.

Return to campus concerns:

May I allow employees to continue to work remotely?

- Northern Michigan University encourages continued remote work, where appropriate, so long as it is effective to do so, as a means of virus mitigation and workplace safety. It is the supervisor's decision whether to continue to allow the employee to work remotely during this time period while work gradually transitions back to campus.
- In the initial return phases, supervisors may consider assigning alternating shifts on-campus, flexible schedules, or allowing rotation between working on-campus/working remote as another approach.
- Northern has implemented many safety measures including face mask requirements, plexiglass barriers, social distancing markers and signage, posting maximum room occupancy information, rearranging/removing furniture, etc. to ensure safety and limit foot traffic in offices, conference rooms and classrooms. As campus opens and students arrive, it is the expectation that Northern will continue to provide exceptional service while maintaining safety by having faculty and staff on campus whenever possible.
- See next question for employees who are in need of an accommodation to work from home.

My employee has expressed concern with returning to work on-campus due to their own (or that of a member of their household) *higher-risk* for a serious COVID-19 infection according to CDC guidelines. What options are available?

- It is not the supervisor's role to determine if the employee is in fact at a higher-risk; the supervisor is only responsible for determining if work can be performed remotely.
- Advise employees who are in need of an accommodation to contact Rhea Dever, AVP of Human Resources, at 227-2333 or Renee Sheen, Assistant Director of Human Resources, at 227-2331. Human Resources will work with the employee and supervisor to determine accommodations and potential alternatives.

As I begin the plan to migrate work back to campus, my employee would like to continue to work from home because their daycare and/or K-12 school is still closed. May they continue to work from home?

- If the employee is working remotely, you are encouraged to allow them to continue do so until such time their child caregiver is again available. This also helps to continue to limit the density of employees on campus as we gradually work toward more robust activity on campus.
- If the employee is unable to fulfill their scheduled work hours through remote work, or if the work cannot be performed remotely, they may apply for Emergency Paid Sick Leave and/or Expanded Family and Medical Leave, under the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act or use their accrued leave time. Employees may read the [Family First Coronavirus Response Act Employee Rights poster](#), the [Family First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\) Frequently Asked Questions page](#), or may contact Kimberly Hongisto, Human Resources Benefits Assistant, at 227-2470 to discuss individual situations.

What do I do if an employee whose work cannot be performed remotely refuses to come back/feels unsafe to return (not due to a protected reason, such as child-care issues or higher-risk individual)?

- Have a discussion with the employee. Emphasize active listening, two-way communication and demonstrate care. Ask what would make them more comfortable to return. NMU can't control all aspects of the environment but is doing all that we can do to help ensure a safe workplace. Discuss the actions that have been taken to support a safe workplace (e.g. face coverings required, sanitizer

available, social distancing requirements, increased sanitization, etc.). For additional support, encourage employee to use the employee assistance program or use the wellness resources found on the [COVID-19 Workplace Guidance page](#).

- Supervisors are encouraged to validate the employee’s feelings (they are personal to the employee and, even if the supervisor doesn’t agree with them personally, invalidating feelings will drive people apart and create mistrust).
 - “Validation” is defined as “the recognition or affirmation that a person or their feelings or opinions are valid or worthwhile”
- Supervisors who communicate with employees and demonstrate genuine concern for employee health and safety will probably see improved confidence among returning employees.
- If the employee continues to express concern, the supervisor needs to reach out to the Safety Department to discuss other potential safety options. If the situation becomes an employee relations concern contact Renee Sheen, Assistant Director of Human Resources, at 227-2331 or Rhea Dever, AVP of Human Resources, at 227-2333.
- Supervisors can share that employees may have the option to use annual leave, personal leave or comp time.

What if an employee does not want to participate in required business travel due to COVID-19 concerns?

- Per the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Northern has suspended all university-sponsored air and ship travel, both domestic and international, for students, faculty and staff until further notice.
- Domestic travel by land is permitted. Supervisors may require such travel that is necessary to perform essential job duties
- Once restrictions are lifted, and absent any prohibitions by governmental authorities, supervisors may require travel to non-restricted areas the CDC deems safe, particularly if such travel is necessary for the employee to perform essential job duties.

Health screening / Reporting Procedures:

Will the university conduct temperature checks or other health screenings?

- Prior to arriving on campus to work, employees will self-assess for COVID-19 risks by using the Daily Self-Screening Questionnaire, available in the [NMU COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan](#). Each day, by reporting to work on campus, employees are attesting that they have reviewed the questionnaire, feel well, do not have apparent COVID-19 symptoms, and do not know that they have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual.
- Supervisors should ensure that student employees have also completed and attested to the [NMU COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan](#).
- Employees have a personal responsibility to practice social distancing, frequent handwashing, cough/sneeze etiquette, proper tissue usage and disposal, avoid touching their face, and respecting their neighbor.
- Avoid handshaking or other forms of physical contact.

What do I do if an employee reports having a COVID-19 positive result, symptom(s) or exposure to someone who has a COVID-19 positive result?

- Employees who feel ill or are experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms will stay home, contact the supervisor and seek appropriate medical care. Any employee who develops symptoms during the workday will contact the supervisor and return home. In addition, employees are expected to contact their supervisor, stay home and seek medical guidance if someone they reside with has been told by a provider to monitor symptoms, were exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19.
- If an employee is out due to any illness and unable to work for three consecutive days/shifts the supervisor is responsible for completing the Absence Notification Form found through the [COVID-19 Reporting Intake Form link](#) on MyNMU under Safety Department Services. “Employee” includes faculty and staff, student employees, and temporary/casual labor. This form must be submitted within 24 hours of being notified of the third day/shift absence regardless of whether the employee has indicated symptoms are COVID-19 related. Supervisors do not need to discuss/confirm symptoms.
- If a faculty and staff, or temporary/casual labor employee has been possibly been exposed to COVID-19 the employee needs to fill out the Potential Exposer Notification Form found through the [COVID-19 Reporting Intake Form link](#) on MyNMU under Safety Department Services.
- Any employee who receives a positive COVID-19 diagnosis is to contact Human Resources directly. If an employee calls and reports the diagnosis to you as the supervisor, record and plan for the absence and direct the employee to contact a member of Human Resources to complete the Intake Form:
 - Kimberly Hongisto, Human Resources Benefits Assistant, at 227-2470
 - Kristen Bjorne, Director of Benefits, 227-1030
 - Renee Sheen, Assistant Director of Human Resources, at 227-2331
 - Rhea Dever, AVP of Human Resources, at 227-2333
 - If calling after normal business hours, contact NMU Police Department Dispatch at 227-2151.
- Note that an individual’s health information is considered confidential by law. It is therefore important for supervisors to share information only with the individuals noted in this reporting process
- The form is a fillable PDF and is submitted online. Do not print out paper forms.
- Do not give out medical advice to the impacted employee or to any employee who has concern related to potential exposure or self-quarantine.

I’ve submitted the COVID-19 Reporting Intake Form, now what I do I need to do?

- Once submitted do not make additional calls to the Safety Department, Facilities, Human Resources, the Health Center or other departments. There are specific protocols in place that will be triggered once the form is submitted.
- You may be contacted by a member of the Safety Department or another designated individual for any additional instructions.
- Do not share medical information with others, including other departmental employees. Communicate that it is a private matter and it is being handled appropriately. If an employee has concerns about his/her own medical wellbeing, you may tell the employee to call his/her own medical provider.

If an employee calls off work for COVID-19 related reason, can work be done remotely?

- Two primary factors must be taken into consideration:

- It is up to the department and the nature of the work for work to be done remotely.
- If an employee is sick, working remotely must be requested by the employee. Supervisors should support employees to take care of themselves and use their available leave as appropriate.
- If an employee will not report to work due COVID-19 related reasons, but requests to work remotely:
 - If remote work is available and the employee has the appropriate equipment and access, the employee may work remotely. Nothing needs to be recorded on the timesheet.
 - If remote work is not possible, the employee will need to take the day off and the proper leave will need to be used.

Are employees with COVID-19 related symptoms required to get tested?

- Northern does not require individuals with any COVID-19 symptom to get tested. Individuals, with guidance/recommendation of their medical provider or Health Department, are responsible for their own health care decisions.

Is a medical note required to return to work?

- The requirement of a medical release is situational.
 - If an employee is out for 1-3 days based on his or her own health there is no return to work notice needed.
 - If an employee is out, and not able to work remotely, for more than three days, the Absence Notification Form is to be complete and Kimberly Hongisto in Benefits will be in contact with the individual to provide FMLA information and documentation. If a return to work notice is necessary, Human Resources will handle the process.
 - If an employee is required to self-quarantine or self-isolate, Human Resources will be informed that the employee will be out for a minimum of 10 days and they will handle the return to work process.

Face Coverings

Will employees be required to wear face coverings in the workplace?

- Yes. Employees are required to wear face coverings when in buildings on campus, when interacting with others and when working outside in situations where social distancing is not practical. The university will provide two masks to each employee and make available a disposable mask for visitors to campus. Please note that bandanas and gaiters are not acceptable face coverings.
- The university will provide gloves for cleaning. The university is also obtaining or making Plexiglas desk shields for those who will eventually be in contact with visitors. The need for special PPE (beyond face coverings and gloves for cleaning) will be considered when supervisors assess the physical workspaces before employees return to work.
- If an employee or student employee is not medically able to wear a face covering, direct the employee to contact Renee Sheen, Assistant Director of Human Resources, at 227-2331 or Rhea Dever, AVP of Human Resources, at 227-2333. Human Resources will work with the employee and will provide guidance to the supervisor.

Who is responsible to enforce adherence to wearing face coverings?

- The university must and will follow the state order/CDC recommendations requiring face coverings. It is the responsibility of each individual to comply with this requirement, and educating and enforcing employees, students and visitors is a shared responsibility. Policies and procedures are enforced by supervisors for employees and by faculty and staff providing services to students and visitors. All employees are expected to communicate with diplomacy. Supervisors should empower their staff to speak up, give examples of appropriate responses, and support employee actions and concerns. Coordinate with Renee Sheen, Assistant Director of Human Resources, at 227-2331 or Rhea Dever, AVP of Human Resources, at 227-2333 for further guidance.
- Supervisors should share that employees are required to wear face coverings at the direction of their employer in response to the direct threat of virus transmission in the workplace. The face coverings must be appropriate for the workplace and worn consistently with University guidelines and the Governor's executive orders.
- The [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#) has released guidance that indicates that an employer may require employees to wear PPE, such as a face mask, gloves, or gowns, to reduce transmission.
- Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends individuals wear cloth face masks in public and where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

Will signage be added to building entrances, to remind individuals face coverings must be worn in campus buildings?

- Yes. Signs will be placed on every exterior door to every building on campus.
- Departments are expected to post a similar sign on the door to their office or on the counter of a reception desk in a visitor's line-of-sight as they enter the office. Information on signage can be found at <https://nmu.edu/safe-on-campus/signage>.

Employee concerns:

How to address complaints from employees about others not complying with the CDC guidance (e.g. wearing face coverings, demonstrating poor cough, sneeze etiquette, not maintaining social distance, etc.).

- NMU expects employees to address these concerns civilly. None of the concerns with the virus excuse us from our core values or leadership standards. We expect employees to communicate with diplomacy about their concerns with others. If the matter can't be resolved civilly and professionally, the matter should be escalated to the supervisor. Supervisors should empower their staff to speak up, give examples of appropriate responses, and support employee actions and concerns. Coordinate with Renee Sheen, Assistant Director of Human Resources, at 227-2331 or Rhea Dever, AVP of Human Resources, at 227-2333 for further guidance.

Employees are exhibiting increased anxiety as more students/employees return to campus. What resources are available to assist them with these emotions?

- NMU provides resources to help benefit-eligible faculty and staff and eligible dependents cope with these types of life events through its Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP provides confidential, short-term counseling at no cost to the employee. Additionally, employees enrolled in the NMU-sponsored health plan can schedule time to speak with a counselor in the privacy of their home through

the telemedicine option. There are also wellness resources through Northstar EAP, BCBS and The Hartford found on the [COVID-19 Workplace Guidance page](#).

Are there any steps supervisors should take to address workplace harassment related to COVID-19?

- Fear and anxiety about an illness can lead to social stigma toward people, places, or things. For example, stigma and discrimination can occur when people associate an illness or disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality, even though not everyone in that population or from that region is specifically at risk for the disease. Stigma can also occur after a person has been released from COVID-19 quarantine even though they are not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others.¹
- Supervisors should remind all employees that it is against the federal law to harass or otherwise discriminate against coworkers as outlined in the Non-Discrimination policy. Supervisors are reminded of their role in watching for, stopping and reporting any harassment or other discrimination to the Equal Opportunity/Title IX office. The university will review any allegations of harassment or discrimination and take appropriate action.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/reducing-stigma.html>