

## **COVID-19 Telecommuting and COVID-19 Paid Leave Update**

SR VP HUMAN RESOURCES

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Dear Rutgers Colleagues:

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As part of our continued efforts to advance measures to support the health and well-being of our community, the university has formalized the COVID-19 Telecommuting and COVID-19 Paid Leave (CPL) process and guidelines. These guidelines are effective immediately and will be in place through April 30, 2020. These measures are in concert with guidance provided by the State.

### **COVID-19 Telecommuting**

Telecommuting is a work arrangement in which some or all work is performed from home or other off-site location. In general, regular office hours are worked, however a department head may approve a work schedule outside of regular business hours.

#### **I. What to Consider**

We are encouraging department heads to be flexible in allowing telecommuting arrangements where feasible. A department head's decision as to whether a telecommuting arrangement is feasible will depend on:

- 1) The employee's job responsibilities – if certain tasks and assignments can be performed at home or must be performed in person or on site;
- 2) Availability of necessary equipment and materials to perform work;
- 3) The home environment – if it is one in which the employee can work productively and safely; and/or,
- 4) Other factors as the university may deem appropriate.

When telecommuting, employees are still obligated to comply with all university rules, policies, and procedures (as they may be modified by the university) to the extent they are deemed necessary and/or appropriate.

Once a determination is made that a telecommuting arrangement is feasible, supervisors should determine:

- 1) The job duties that will be performed during telecommuting hours;
- 2) The expected work schedule and work hours including availability for calls, if needed;
- 3) How communications will be maintained;

- 4) How safety and security of sensitive data will be maintained; and
- 5) Timekeeping expectations for non-exempt employees

## **II. How to Formalize COVID-19 Telecommuting Arrangements**

Supervisors should complete a COVID-19 Telecommuting Plan and Acknowledgement Form, <https://discover-uhr.rutgers.edu/docs/covid-19-telecommuting-plan-acknowledgment>, for each employee for whom a telecommuting arrangement has been approved. A copy of the completed form should be sent to Ryan Kelly at [rk511@hr.rutgers.edu](mailto:rk511@hr.rutgers.edu) for Legacy Rutgers units and Miluska Rivera at [miluska7@hr.rutgers.edu](mailto:miluska7@hr.rutgers.edu) for RBHS units.

For further information regarding COVID-19 Telecommuting, please visit our Online Guidance for COVID-19 Telecommuting at <https://discover-uhr.rutgers.edu/covid-19-telecommuting/home>.

### **COVID-19 Paid Leave (CPL)**

#### **I. Eligibility**

All employees, except casual and hourly employees and student workers, will be eligible to apply for COVID-19 Paid Leave. Approval of CPL will be subject to the submission of appropriate documentation within five (5) business days of the initial absence, or, if the employee is already absent at the time these guidelines are issued, within five (5) business days of issuance of these guidelines. If CPL is approved, employees will be excused from work and will be paid their regular pay without being required to charge accrued paid time off (e.g., vacation, sick time, etc.) except as set forth in the Special Notes section in this memo. CPL may be approved under the following circumstances:

- 1) An employee is diagnosed with COVID-19;
- 2) An employee is directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine due to suspicion of exposure to or diagnosis with COVID-19;
- 3) An employee is undergoing a period of self-quarantine or isolation pursuant to public health assessment recommendations;
- 4) An employee is providing care to an immediate family member (spouse, child, parent, or someone who stood in *loco parentis* when you were a child) who (i) has been diagnosed with COVID-19, (ii) was directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine due to suspicion of exposure to or diagnosis with COVID-19, or (iii) is undergoing a period of self-quarantine or isolation pursuant to public health assessment recommendations, and/or
- 5) School Closure - An employee is staying at home to provide care for a child (defined as a biological, adopted, or foster child, stepchild or legal ward of an employee, child of a domestic partner or civil union partner of the employee) due to the closure of the

child's preschool program, elementary or secondary school, or childcare center related to COVID-19.

- a. If an employee is staying home due to School Closure as described above, the employee is required to work with their supervisor to identify any work functions that are critical to continuity of operations and the feasibility of the employee fulfilling those mission critical functions remotely through a mutually agreed upon flexible or modified work schedule.
- b. If an employee provides patient care or is otherwise deemed essential in accordance with University Policy 60.1.29, even in the event of a School Closure as described above, the employee may be required to report to work and will be paid at their regular rate of pay.

## **II. Special Notes**

### **1) Working Remotely During the Period of Self Quarantine**

If an employee is under self-quarantine as indicated under CPL eligibility, but is asymptomatic, such employee will be required to work remotely if deemed feasible by the supervisor.

### **2) Employee is Not Eligible for COVID-19 Paid Leave**

If an employee does not meet the conditions set forth above for COVID-19 Paid Leave and the employee requests a leave of absence, the employee will be required to follow university policy and/or the applicable Collective Negotiations Agreement to seek a leave of absence.

### **3) Essential Employees**

Unless excused from work due to illness, COVID-19 related self-quarantine, or an approved leave for the care of a sick family member, essential employees must report to work as directed by their supervisor and will be paid at their regular rate of pay. If an essential employee does not report to work as directed, the employee may be required to charge paid time off in accordance with university policy, or be subject to employment action as deemed appropriate by their supervisor.

### **4) Use of Other Leave**

All COVID-19 Paid Leave requests that meet the eligibility criteria will be approved subject to submission of appropriate documentation to OneSource. If the necessary documentation is not received, the employee will be required to charge paid leave time in accordance with university policy/corresponding appropriate negotiated labor agreement.

### **5) Probationary Employees**

Approved COVID-19 Paid Leave (CPL) shall not count toward the completion of the probationary period for any qualified employee.

### **III. Required Documentation**

1) **Diagnosed with or caring for a family member diagnosed with COVID-19**

For cases where individuals are diagnosed with COVID-19 or are caring for a family member diagnosed with COVID-19, a letter or note from a health care provider that specifically states the employee or family member's diagnosis of COVID-19 or suspicion of exposure to COVID-19, including a start date and estimated return to work date, will satisfy the documentation requirement.

2) **Self-Quarantine**

For cases where individuals are undergoing a period of isolation or quarantine, documentation from a local, state, or federal government agency, a medical professional, office, or hospital or proof that the employee was recently in a location where the recommendation by a governmental agency is to self-quarantine will satisfy the requirement to provide documentation.

3) **School Closure**

For cases where individuals have to stay home with a child due to a school closure, a letter or communication from the preschool program, elementary, secondary school, child care center, or local, state or federal governmental agency will satisfy the documentation requirement.

### **IV. How to Apply for COVID-19 Paid Leave (CPL)**

- 1) Log into OneSource: [Onesource.rutgers.edu](https://onesource.rutgers.edu)
- 2) Browse to the Service Catalog and select the COVID-19 Related Services Option
- 3) Select the COVID-19 Leave Request/Inquiry
- 4) Complete the Online Form by providing your leave reason, supervisor name, preferred contact information, and indicate whether you are currently working. If you are not currently working, you will be asked to provide your last day worked and estimated return date.
- 5) Upload your doctor's note or school closure notification. Please ensure the begin date and estimated return date on the online form match your documentation.
- 6) Your supervisor will receive a notification advising of the approved leave and duration, pending the receipt of your documentation.
- 7) A COVID-19 case will be created allowing you to communicate directly with HR regarding your case.

- 8) If you need to remain out of work beyond your original estimated return to work date and your case has been closed, please complete a new COVID-19 Paid Leave request and provide updated documentation.

We have developed a list of Frequently Asked Questions for your convenience. We thank you for your dedication and service as we continue to manage university operations during these unprecedented times.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS– COVID-19 PAID LEAVE (CPL)**

### **Effective March 12, 2020 through April 30, 2020**

#### **1. If I am diagnosed with COVID-19, what should I do?**

You should contact OneSource as soon as possible and forward appropriate medical documentation confirming the diagnosis within five (5) business days of your initial absence. You should also let your supervisor know that you will be absent due to illness, but you are not required to disclose your medical diagnosis to your supervisor.

Diagnosed employees are advised to stay home and follow medical direction regarding treatment and absence from work. Diagnosed employees are permitted to be absent from work and will not have to charge accrued paid time off during such absence.

#### **2. What if I am quarantined or otherwise unable to work due to exposure to COVID-19?**

If an employee is directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine due to suspicion of, exposure to, or diagnosis with COVID-19, the employee will not be required to charge accrued paid time off if they provide documentation to OneSource, verifying the same within five (5) business days of the initial absence, if feasible. You should also notify your supervisor that you will not be reporting to work.

For cases where individuals are undergoing a period of isolation or quarantine, documentation from a local, state or federal governmental agency, a medical professional, office, or hospital or proof that the employee was recently in a location where the recommendation by a governmental agency is to self-quarantine will satisfy the requirement to provide documentation.

If an employee does not provide such documentation, the employee will be required to utilize accrued paid time off for any absence, in accordance with university policy.

#### **3. What happens if I am absent from work due to a local school closing?**

Employees have to stay home with a child due to the closure of a preschool program, elementary or secondary school, or childcare center related to COVID-19, will be required to provide documentation verifying the closing. Such documentation should be submitted to OneSource. You should also notify your supervisor that you will not be reporting to work.

Supervisors should determine if work from home arrangements are feasible for both non-exempt and exempt employees during the period of the closure. Please refer to the Online Guidance for COVID-19 Telecommuting at <https://discover-uhr.rutgers.edu/covid-19-telecommuting/home>. Supervisors must consider the feasibility, operations, technology needs, and access for those employees whose jobs permit telecommuting.

If a telecommuting arrangement cannot be accommodated, an employee will not be required to use accrued leave during the period of the COVID-19-related closure. However, unless excused from work due to illness, COVID-19 related self-quarantine, or an approved leave for the care of a sick family member, essential employees must report to work as directed by their supervisor, and will be paid at their regular rate of pay. If an essential employee does not report to work as directed, the employee may be required to charge paid time off in accordance with university policy, or be subject to employment action as deemed appropriate by their supervisor.

**4. What is the definition of “child” as referenced above in question 3?**

Child is defined as a biological, adopted, or foster child, stepchild or legal ward of an employee, child of a domestic partner or civil union partner of the employee.

**5. If I need to stay home to care with a family member diagnosed with COVID- 19, what should I do?**

If an employee needs to care for an immediate family member who (i) has been diagnosed with COVID-19, (ii) was directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine due to possible exposure to or diagnosis with COVID-19, and/or (iii) is undergoing a period of self-quarantine or isolation pursuant to public health assessment recommendations, the employee should contact OneSource. You should also notify your supervisor that you will not be reporting to work.

Employees shall submit appropriate documentation verifying the family member’s COVID-19-related illness, exposure, and/or quarantine period to the OneSource within five (5) business days of the employee’s initial absence.

If no such documentation is received, the employee will be required to charge applicable accrued paid time off (i.e. sick leave).

**6. What is the definition of “family member” as referenced above in question 5?**

Family member is defined as spouse, child, parent, or someone who stood in *loco parentis* when you were a child.

**7. What type of documentation will I be required to submit?**

**Diagnosed with or caring for a family member diagnosed with COVID-19** - For cases where individuals are diagnosed with COVID-19 or are caring for a family member diagnosed with COVID-19, a letter or note from a health care provider that specifically states the employee or family member’s diagnosis of

COVID-19 or suspicion of exposure to COVID-19, including a start date and estimated return to work date, will satisfy the documentation requirement.

**Self-Quarantine** - For cases where individuals are undergoing a period of isolation or quarantine, documentation from a local, state, or federal government agency, a medical professional, office, or hospital or proof that the employee was recently in a location where the recommendation by a governmental agency is to self-quarantine will satisfy the requirement to provide documentation.

**School Closure** - For cases where individuals who have to stay home with a child due to school closures, a letter or communication from the preschool program, elementary, secondary school, child care center, or local, state or federal governmental agency will satisfy the documentation requirement.

#### **8. What is the time frame to submit appropriate documentation to OneSource?**

For all COVID-19-related absences referenced above, appropriate documentation must be received by OneSource within five (5) business days of the initial absence, if feasible.

If such documentation is not received within two (2) weeks from the initial date of the absence, the employee will be required to charge applicable accrued paid time off (i.e., Sick, Sick Leave, VAC, AL, PH, or ML) for the absence.

Sincerely,

Vivian Fernández

Senior Vice President for Human Resources & Organizational Effectiveness