

# **RETURN TO NORMAL OPERATIONS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

March 18, 2021



# RETURN TO NORMAL OPERATIONS

## Disclaimer:

The guidance is based on the information available at this time and will be updated as more information becomes available.

This presentation is primarily intended for the Columbia campus. Upstate, Aiken, and Beaufort may have slight procedural variations.

# RETURN TO WORK - RECAP

- Governor McMaster issued Executive Order 2021-12
- USC's RTW plan was submitted and approved by State HR
- Staff employees who do not fall into an exception were to report for on campus work during the week of March 15, 2021.
- Return dates for employees who meet exceptions will be phased in over the next six weeks.
  - Childcare exceptions extended through April 5, 2021
  - High risk health conditions extended through April 17, 2021
  - Limited extensions may be available

# **HIGH RISK MEDICAL CONDITIONS & ADA CONSIDERATIONS**

# HIGH RISK AND ADA CONSIDERATIONS

- Employees are expected to obtain a vaccine and report to work as soon as vaccination protocol is complete but no later than **April 17, 2021**.
- High risk employees (as defined by the CDC) may request an extension to temporarily work remotely past April 17, 2021, if they can provide documentation that they are currently in the process of being vaccinated.
- Each request will be evaluated separately to determine if the employee's request to continue to work remotely is warranted.

# **CAN WE ALLOW MORE TIME BEYOND APRIL 19 FOR EMPLOYEES WITH A DISABILITY TO BE FULLY VACCINATED?**

Yes. Employees with a disability that places them at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 may receive additional time to be fully vaccinated before returning to the workplace if the employee can complete his/her job duties remotely and if no other safety measures can be implemented. Allowing employees with such a disability to remain teleworking until fully vaccinated should only be a temporary accommodation.

# **THE CDC INDICATES THAT PREGNANT INDIVIDUALS ARE AT INCREASED RISK DUE TO COVID. HOW SHOULD WE HANDLE EXPECTING EMPLOYEES?**

A pregnant employee should be treated the same as any other employee with a disability that places him/her at increased risk for severe illness due to COVID. If the employee is not going to be vaccinated while pregnant, the department should work with the pregnant employee on a case-by-case basis to identify an accommodation, if needed.

# DOES THIS GUIDANCE IMPACT PRE-EXISTING ADA REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS?

No, nothing in the guidance supersedes the university's obligation to abide by the ADA and other federal and state laws. Therefore, if an existing reasonable accommodation is in place for an employee, this guidance does not supplant that accommodation. Similarly, if an employee has a disability which impacts his/her ability to perform one or more essential functions of his/her position other than returning to the workplace, the department should work with the employee on a one-on-one basis through the interactive process to identify possible reasonable accommodations.



# HIGH RISK & ADA QUESTIONS

# CHILDCARE CONSIDERATIONS

# CHILDCARE ISSUES

- All employees are expected to return to the workplace fulltime. However, parents with pre-school or school age dependents who attend school or daycare facilities not offering in-person instruction/care may be given additional time, not to exceed **April 5, 2021**, to make arrangements for alternative childcare accommodations.
- Colleges/Divisions have the authority to approve flex-time and compressed schedules when possible to accommodate employee needs.

# CHILDCARE ISSUES

- Employees unable to identify alternate childcare arrangements by April 5, 2021 may take leave, *including sick leave*, during dates and times that school and daycare are not available.
- Limited telecommuting extensions beyond April 5<sup>th</sup> will be considered in extreme cases when it would create an undue hardship on the department or the employee would be limited to using leave without pay (LWOP)

**Many school districts are designating mandatory virtual school days. Should employees be allowed to telework on those days or must employees take leave if they cannot arrange for other childcare options?**

Departments should handle mandatory virtual days in a manner consistent with how the agency has previously handled teacher in-service days or other school closures.

# CHILDCARE QUESTIONS

# TELECOMMUTING

# EXCEPTIONS: TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT

- **Employees who are working remotely because of a formal telecommuting agreement that was in place prior to February 20, 2020.** The terms of these agreements will remain in place.
- Formal telecommuting agreements initiated after February 20, 2020 will need to be submitted to Employee Relations for review.
- The May 15, 2021 end date for temporary remote work agreements established in response to the pandemic is rescinded effective March 19, 2021. All employees covered by these agreements must report to campus or meet one of the other exceptions.



# IF WE HAVE EMPLOYEES WHO WANT TO TELECOMMUTE CAN THEY?

No, guidance from State Human Resources is no new telecommuting agreement should be authorized at this time. State HR is looking into new guidelines for telecommuting in the future.

# ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS TO TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENTS ESTABLISHED AFTER FEBRUARY 20,2020?

- Departments may submit telecommuting agreements to Employee Relations for considerations. Detailed justification must accompany the request for a temporary extension.
  - Examples: Loss of office space or employee moving to Columbia

# TELECOMMUTING QUESTIONS

# DAILY CENSUS

# DAILY CENSUS QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

- Number of employees working remotely due to medical condition/dependent care
- Number of employees working remotely due to isolation/quarantine
- Number of employees on leave related to COVID-19
- Number of employees on leave not related to COVID-19/Not scheduled to work
- Number of employees working at the office
- Number of employees working remotely other
  - This category should be used to capture data on employees who *are working remotely due to situations unrelated to COVID-19*. For example, you would include an employee who is working remotely due to a previous work agreement prior to COVID-19 in this category. Another situation that would fit into this category would be an employee who is working remotely due to the condition of their office while under construction. Any faculty working remotely would be included in this category.

# **Additional Information and Resources for HR Contacts**

# VACCINES

Employees are strongly encouraged to obtain the vaccine as soon they can schedule an appointment.

Vaccination is not a condition of return. Only approved personnel in high risk categories will be approved to continue remote work while they complete the vaccination process.

## Vaccine Information

- [UofSC COVID Vaccine Information](#)
- [DHEC Vaccine Information](#)

# INFORMATION FOR SUPERVISORS/MANAGERS

- [COVID 19 Information in HR Toolbox](#)
- [COVID 19 Safety Guidelines](#)
- Return to Work Template for those with Schedule Change
- Return to Normal Operations FAQs
- Expected to follow all safety protocols. Whenever possible continue to conduct group meetings via TEAMS to maintain social distancing.



# INFORMATION FOR COLLEGE/DIVISION HR CONTACT

- [Remote Tracker](#)
- [Attestation Form](#)
- Daily Census Reporting
- Return to Work Template for those with Schedule Change
- Return to Normal Operations FAQs
- Expected to follow all safety protocols. Whenever possible continue to conduct group meetings via TEAMS to maintain social distancing.

# QUESTIONS?



**THANKS!**