MEMORANDUM HR COVID-19

TO: Vice Presidents, Deans and Directors

CC: Human Resources and Business Contacts

FROM: Caroline Agardy, Vice President
Division of Human Resources

DATE: March 13, 2020

RE: HR COVID-19: Workplace Considerations

During the next several weeks as our university works to limit the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and keep our students, faculty and staff safe, we know that you will need additional latitude to manage your workforce. The following information regarding restricting sick employees from the workplace and telecommuting is provided to assist you in promoting health and safety while also maintaining operations. Please share this information with your managers.

Mitigating Workplace Exposure

The university’s authority to require and enforce a self-quarantine during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) situation rests with the supervisor or manager to exercise good judgement regarding when to send an employee home who may be a risk.

- Employees who are sick should stay home.
- Employees who are at work and exhibit flu or flu-like symptoms, including coronavirus symptoms, should be sent home and take sick leave when available.
- Employees who have been directed by a health care professional to self-quarantine should remain home and take sick leave when available.
- Employees who are not exhibiting symptoms, but have traveled to a country with a CDC Travel Warning - Level 3 or an area experiencing widespread or sustained transmission of COVID-19 and are self-quarantining should use annual
leave, compensatory time or leave without pay when available, or they may be allowed to work from home. See Telecommuting section of this memorandum.

**Helping Employees Manage Time Away from the Office**
We recognize that employees may be reluctant to stay away from work if they do not have leave time available.

**For Employees Who Earn Leave:**

- If an employee who is asked to leave the workplace for observable illness, expresses concern about lack of paid leave, the supervisor must still insist the employee return home and reassure them they will explore all options for leave including advancing sick leave.

- HR 1.06 Sick Leave allows the advancement of up to 15 days of sick leave with the approval of the Vice President for Human Resources or their designee. During the COVID-19 event, approval will be expedited upon documentation from a licensed health care provider. All advanced leave will be repaid as the employee earns future sick leave.

- Leave from the leave transfer pool may also be an option if required conditions are met.

**For Employees Who Do Not Earn Leave:**

Enforced time away from the office presents a particular hardship for employees who do not earn leave. We are monitoring actions taken at the federal and state level and are in contact with the State Division of HR as solutions are being explored.

We strongly encourage supervisors and managers to offer appropriate telecommuting options whenever the employee is healthy enough to work.

**Tip Sheet:**
The Division of Human resources has posted a tip sheet to assist supervisors and managers as they work with affected employees. Please share this tip sheet with supervisors and managers in your area.

**Telecommuting**
Departments may consider allowing employees to work from home or from a safe off-site location.

If an employee is self-quarantining, working from a remote location could be a viable option. Telecommuting may also be helpful if an employee is in a high-risk category or for workspaces where employees are in close proximity to other employees.
Telecommuting could be needed if the university later encourages employees to stay away from campus. Units are encouraged to include telecommuting as part of their contingency plans.

Policy HR 1.22, Telecommuting, sets forth guidelines for telecommuting. Normally we require a formal telecommuting agreement before an employee can work remotely; however, a formal agreement is not required during emergency situations. The requirement that an employee must have completed six-months of satisfactory employment is waived during this COVID-19 event. Units should document their telecommuting plans and employees must have the approval of their supervisors to telecommute.

We encourage departments to be flexible and creative as they consider options for allowing employees to work remotely. Employees whose jobs do not normally lend themselves to telecommuting may be able to view training materials, document processes and procedures, or perform other meaningful work. We will also allow telecommuting during this time for employees in temporary positions.

In some cases, it might be appropriate to allow for a combination of both working time and leave time, annual, sick, or leave without pay to account for all normally scheduled working hours. An employee should not record working time for periods when they are not performing some type of authorized work. The requirement to record applicable leave applies to both Exempt and Non-Exempt employees.

It is important that the work done by employees remotely is monitored by the supervisor and the work take place during the employee’s normally scheduled hours, unless other arrangements have been approved. Any requests for overtime or compensatory time must be approved by the supervisor in advance. Departments may institute other requirements before allowing employees to work remotely, such as higher-level approval by a department head.

These telecommuting guidelines are only in effect during the period of this particular COVID-19 event. Management retains authority to approve all telecommuting requests and may terminate the agreement at any time.

If you have questions regarding Telecommuting, please contact the Employee Relations Office at 803-777-3821. Check the university’s COVID-19 landing page for additional tips on how to stay healthy and more information about COVID-19.