

September 2, 2009

UW-Madison Flu Pandemic Planning HR Guidelines

These HR guidelines will be implemented when **Level 1 (Recognition)** of the Flu Pandemic Plan is reached.

When Employees Indicate Sickness

When an employee indicates they are sick (calls in or e-mails), the supervisor or designate should state that if he/she has flu-like symptoms (fever $> 100^{\circ}$ and either sore throat or cough), he/she needs to stay home until they are fever free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medication). If the employee does indicate they have flu-like symptoms, the supervisor should follow the reporting/notification protocols below and refer the employee to the *Information for Employees with Flu-like Symptoms* that was distributed earlier in the year (Attachment 1).

When Employees Exhibit Flu-Like Symptoms at Work

Employees at work who have flu-like symptoms (fever $> 100^{\circ}$ and either sore throat or cough) must be told, not just be given permission, to go home. Supervisors are not to assess the severity of an employee's illness, take their temperature or evaluate their symptoms. However, outward signs of an illness (coughing and sore throat) and the employee confirming he/she has a fever when asked will provide the supervisor with enough information to send the employee home. If an employee is sent home due to flu-like symptoms, a copy of the *Information for Employees with Flu-like Symptoms* (Attachment 1) should be provided.

The full supervisor protocol for attending to employees with flu-like symptoms is within Attachment 2. This protocol must be followed to lessen the impact of the flu pandemic.

Duration for Staying Home

If the supervisor is told or knows the employee has flu-like symptoms, the employee must be instructed to stay away from the work place until he/she is fever free for 24 hours (without the aid of fever-reducing medicine). This is critical to prevent passing the flu on to others since people remain contagious even if they are feeling better. If the employee with flu-like symptoms would like to return to work before the prescribed timeframe expires, he/she must provide a physician's statement indicating she/he is no longer ill. Divisions can require an employee to call their supervisor before returning to work so a status update of their condition can be provided.

Attendance Policies and Doctor's Notes for Flu-like Symptoms

During the duration of the flu pandemic (Level 1 – Recognition or higher), employees being absent due to having or caring for an immediate family member (or equivalent) with a flu-like illness will not have the absence counted as an incident under any campus attendance

policy – although the employee must use sick leave or other accrued leave to remain in pay status. This will reduce incidents of employees coming to the workplace with a flu-like illness.

The Board of Regents are considering a temporary waiver of the requirement that unclassified staff provide a doctor's note justifying an absence of greater than five days for illness with flu-like symptoms. If approved at the September Regent meeting, this will prevent unnecessary visits to clinics at a time when they might already be overwhelmed.

Notification of Employer and Co-workers/Students

Supervisors or chairs should notify co-workers and students that they came in close contact with someone with flu-like symptoms (employee name not provided). It needs to be made clear that conduct which harasses, discriminates, or retaliates against employees who may have contracted a flu-like illness will not be tolerated. See the full supervisor protocol in Attachment 2.

In any case, Divisions need to notify University Health Services of the illness by sending an e-mail to pandemicinfo@mhub.uwpd.wisc.edu with the division/department name, the date of the flu-like symptoms and number of employees out. Divisions do not need to provide the employee's name. This notification should occur whenever a new case of flu-like symptoms is identified. Divisions can decide how they want this reporting coordinated (e.g., through HR) within their organization.

When an Employee is Exposed to Someone with Flu-Like Symptoms and/or Confirmed or Suspected H1N1 Influenza

Employees who have come in close contact with an individual with flu-like symptoms and/or confirmed or suspected H1N1 influenza do not need to take any special precautions UNLESS they have a chronic illness such as asthma or diabetes, a weakened immune system or are pregnant; these individual should consult with their health care provider. All employees are able to come to work normally without restrictions unless they have flu-like symptoms.

Identifying “Essential Personnel”

Under the COOP (Continuity of Operations Plan), each department is supposed to identify their essential employees in case of emergencies. These are the employees who need to work (e.g., police, power plant operators, those providing care to patients or animals, etc) during an emergency. Non-essential employees are those whose services are not critical during an emergency. Essential employees should be notified of their status and back-ups should be identified in case they are unable to come to work.

Provide Advice on Work-From-Home Issues

In the event of a pandemic, the university may institute “social distancing” policies. In other words, employees who are not identified as essential may be directed to stay away from

work. Those employees should be directed to work from home when possible. In these emergency circumstances, a Telecommuting Agreement form does not need to be completed. Supervisors should assess, in advance, the possibility of employees working at home. This may include surveying staff about home internet access and doing a test (trial day working at home) to see if telecommuting is feasible.

Paid and Unpaid Leave during a Pandemic

When Employees are Absent Due to Flu-like Symptoms

Employees with accrued leave benefits may request approval for use of sick leave, vacation leave and other paid leave consistent with applicable university and state policies. When paid leave is exhausted or unavailable, employees may be granted unpaid leaves of absence, consistent with applicable policies. The university does not have the authority to grant paid time off, other than through the accrued leave programs. Such a decision would have to be made by the governor.

Employees who are absent from work because of flu-like symptoms may use available paid leave (sick leave, annual leave-including vacation, etc.) to cover the absence, or must arrange with the supervisor to make up the time. Hourly employees (covered under the FLSA overtime provisions) must account for each hour of scheduled duty. Salaried employees (exempt from the FLSA overtime provisions) may account for their time in a manner consistent with their professional responsibilities, as approved by their supervisors. If classes are postponed, faculty should make every effort to reschedule them at a later date or conduct them through alternative means such as online courses.

Non-Essential Employees Directed to Stay Away from Work

Some services, while critical to the long-term success of the university, are not essential during a short-term crisis. If the university determines that social-distancing measures are necessary, employees performing nonessential services may be directed to work at home, if possible. If the nature of the work does not allow for work to be performed at home, they may be directed to stay away from the worksite and remain prepared to return at any time.

Essential employees also may be directed to work at home, if possible, to accomplish the goals of social distancing. If directed to work at home, employees will continue to be paid because they are fulfilling their responsibilities.

Employees able to work who are directed to stay away from the worksite and don't have the option to work at home will continue to be paid to the extent allowed by state, federal and regent laws, regulations and policies. These employees may be called upon to perform duties off campus as assigned by UW-Madison. Depending on the severity of the measures taken to address the influenza pandemic, temporary and/or permanent layoffs may need to be implemented.

(Document should be provided on divisional letterhead to all employees and be referred to when employee has flu-like symptoms)

Information for Employees with Flu-like Symptoms

It is not advantageous for you or the University if you report to work with flu-like symptoms. When dealing with highly contagious diseases like influenza, *employees need to stay home and not infect co-workers and students.*

Below are some basic guidelines for employees regarding the protocol for flu-like symptoms.

1. Employees who have flu-like symptoms must stay home or go home.

Flu-like symptoms are:

- a sore throat and a fever of 100 degrees or higher
- or-
- a cough and a fever of 100 degrees or higher

This is necessary to limit the spread of influenza – which is very contagious.

2. You must stay away from work until you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicine.

This is critical to prevent passing the flu on to others since people remain contagious even if they are feeling better. You may return to work prior to being fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication only if you secure a doctor's note indicating you are no longer ill.

3. You do not need to provide a note from your doctor or health care provider to justify your absence for flu-like symptoms.

Normal University requirements to provide doctor's notes to justify absences have been suspended for flu-like symptoms. However, you do need to follow your normal work unit procedures when calling in sick. *(Optional statement: Before returning to work, you need to make contact with your supervisor to provide an update on your status).*

4. You should consult your personal health care provider if you have questions or concerns about your illness.

If you have a chronic illness like asthma or diabetes, a weakened immune system or are pregnant, you should consult with your health care provider to determine if additional actions are needed. If in doubt, contact your health care provider for advice. Emergency warning signs that require immediate medical attention include difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, or severe or persistent vomiting.

5. Go to <http://flu.wisc.edu> for more information or contact your organization's HR representative (Optional: divisions can print this information out and attach it to the correspondence).

(Document should be provided on divisional letterhead to all employees and be referred to when employee has flu-like symptoms)

Check List for Supervisors with Employees who have Flu-like Symptoms

Flu-Like Symptoms:

- a sore throat and a fever of 100° degrees or higher
- or-
- a cough and a fever of 100° degrees or higher

1. When an employee is indicating he/she is sick (calling in, e-mailing), state that if he/she has flu-like symptoms (fever > 100° and either sore throat or cough), he/she needs to stay home until they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication. If the employee does indicate they have flu-like symptoms, refer to the protocol for notification and reporting below.

If the employee is at work and has flu-like symptoms, tell him/her that she/he must go home until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication. The employee could be provided with a surgical mask (if available) and placed in a non-public area if they are not able to immediately leave the workplace. Alternative transportation should be encouraged if the employee uses public transportation to get to work. Refer to the protocol for notification and reporting below.

The employee may return to work prior to being fever-free for 24 hours only with a doctor's note indicating that he/she is no longer ill.

2. Refer the employee to the document *Information for Employees with Flu-like Symptoms* (Attachment 1) that was distributed earlier in the year. Provide a copy if the employee is currently at work or refer to campus website (<http://flu.wisc.edu/>) Also ask the employee who they came into contact with in the workplace in the 24 hours prior to the start of symptoms.
3. If the person develops any of the emergency warning signs at work such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, or severe or persistent vomiting, call 911.
4. Utilize the text in Attachment 3 to notify employees and students with whom the ill employee came in close contact in the 24 hours prior to the start of the symptoms (don't provide name of ill employee). This can be accomplished through e-mail, postings, verbal communication, etc.
5. Notify University Health Services of the illness by sending an e-mail to pandemicinfo@mhub.uwpd.wisc.edu with the department name, the date of the illness and number of employees with flu-like symptoms. (*Optional: Divisions can insert their own protocol for reporting this information to UHS*)

Information for Employees – Close Contact with Individual with Flu-Like Symptoms

As you may have already heard, an employee with whom you may have come in close contact has become ill with flu-like symptoms. Flu-like illnesses are common in Wisconsin and on campus at this time. We have reported the case to the University Health Services and have received their advice about what information to provide you.

If you are not experiencing flu-like symptoms and are otherwise healthy, you do not need to take any action.

If, however, you have a chronic illness like asthma or diabetes, a weakened immune system or are pregnant, you should consult with your health care provider to determine if additional actions are needed. If in doubt, contact your health care provider for advice.

If you experience flu-like symptoms (Fever > 100 degrees and either cough or sore throat), please stay home until you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication. This is critical if we are to stop the illness from spreading.

Employees who have flu-like symptoms should not be harassed, discriminated, or retaliated against. This negative behavior will not be tolerated.

The concerns for the spread of the H1N1 (swine) flu has helped demonstrate how we can all act to protect our health and our colleagues' health from the spread of influenza viruses. Prevent catching or spreading the flu by:

- Washing your hands or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer regularly.
- Covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your shirtsleeve (using your hand is less helpful as you may unintentionally pass a virus through contact)
- If you develop flu-like symptoms, *stay home or go home*.

The UW-Madison website has additional information about the illness, its symptoms and precautions you can take to keep your self healthy. The web page can be found at <http://flu.wisc.edu>.