

# Returning to Work Guide

An overview to prepare UHCL Staff & Faculty for a  
safe return to work

University of Houston  Clear Lake

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## Introduction

The University of Houston-Clear Lake's policies and protocols in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be focused on the safety of our employees (both staff and faculty), students, and the public.

UHCL's plans will be aligned and consistent with local orders and ordinances of the [City of Houston](#) and [Harris County](#), as well as the [State of Texas Phased Reopening Model](#).

Our plans will also follow recommendations from the [Federal Government](#) (Opening Guidelines), and [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

This is a fluid situation and our knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve. Our policies and plans will be updated as needed as more information becomes available.



## Workplace Expectations & Guidelines

All employees are expected to fully comply with the policies, protocols, and guidelines outlined in this document as part of UHCL's safe Return to Work guidelines. Failure to comply may result in corrective action.

## Symptom Self-Monitoring Requirement

Employees who have been instructed to return to the workplace must conduct symptom monitoring every day before reporting to work. You must be free of ANY of the symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 to be eligible to report to work.

At this time, these symptoms include one or more of the following:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19

(Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>)

According to the CDC, individuals with certain conditions may have a higher risk for COVID-19 infection. Those conditions may include:

- Adults aged 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People with HIV
- Asthma (moderate to severe)
- Chronic Lung Disease
- Serious Heart Conditions
- Chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis
- Severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- A compromised immune system
- People with liver disease
- People who are diabetic

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk-old.html>

Employees who have been instructed to return to work on-site and have concerns about doing so due to a medical condition that places them in a higher risk group, who are pregnant, or those who wish to seek ADA Reasonable Accommodations related to returning to the workplace should review the [UHCL ADAADA Procedures](#) regarding a workplace accommodation or contact the UHCL ADA Coordinator at 281-283-2305.

## Phased Staffing

UHCL will assess the need for expanded staffing based on mission-critical operations, ability to control and manage specific work environments, and the necessity to access on-site resources.

A reduction in the number of people on campus will continue for some time to help meet social distancing requirements. Support units that can continue to effectively work remotely will remain as-is until restrictions are eased for larger group gatherings.

Expanded staffing will be tightly controlled and coordinated to mitigate potential risks and ensure the safety of all employees, as well as the communities we serve. No unit or department should increase staffing levels beyond current needs to support critical on-site operations without approval from their respective Vice President or Provost. Once decisions to expand on-site staffing in certain areas have been made, employees should follow the policies and protocols detailed in this guide.

As staffing on-site increases and operations expand, officials will closely monitor and assess the potential spread of the virus, as well as existing policies and procedures to mitigate it.

## Staffing Options

The following are options departments should consider to maintain required social distancing measures and reduce population density within buildings and workspaces.

### **Remote Work:**

Those who can work remotely to fulfill some or all of their work responsibilities may continue to do so to reduce the number of individuals on campus and the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus. These arrangements, which should be approved by the immediate supervisor, can be done on a full or partial day/week schedule as appropriate.

### **Alternating Days:**

In order to limit the number of individuals and interactions among those on campus, departments should schedule partial staffing on alternating days. Such schedules will help enable social distancing, especially in areas with large common workspaces.

### **Staggered Reporting/Departing:**

The beginning and end of the workday typically brings many people together at common entry/exit points of buildings. Staggering reporting and departure times by at least 30 minutes will reduce traffic in common areas to meet social distancing requirements. (See Enter/Exit Controls for further details).

## Personal Safety Practices

**Face masks/Cloth Face Coverings:** Face masks or face coverings must be worn by all employees working on campus when in the presence of others and in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., common work spaces, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Appropriate use of face masks or coverings is critical in minimizing risks to others near you. You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. The mask or cloth face covering is not a substitute for social distancing.

Disposable masks will be provided by UHCL, if needed. Disposable masks may only be worn for one day and then must be placed in the trash.

You may also wear a cloth face covering, which will help UHCL reduce the need to purchase additional masks, which are in short supply. Cloth face coverings must only be worn for one day at a time, and must be properly laundered before use again. Having a week supply of cloth face coverings can help reduce the need for daily laundering.

See details regarding mask use and care below.

Type and Intended Use of Face Coverings/Masks				
Type	Cloth Face Covering 	Disposable Mask 	Medical-Grade Surgical Mask 	N95 Respirator 
Description	Home-made or commercially manufactured face coverings that are washable and help contain wearer's respiratory emissions	Commercially manufactured masks that help contain wearer's respiratory emissions	FDA-approved masks to protect the wearer from large droplets and splashes; helps contain wearer's respiratory emissions	Provide effective respiratory protection from airborne particles and aerosols; helps contain wearer's respiratory emissions
Intended use	Required for campus community use in non-healthcare settings (office spaces, general research/work settings, shops, community areas where 6' social distancing cannot be consistently maintained. Must be replaced daily. (While likely necessary for ingress and egress, not required when working alone in an office).		These masks are reserved for healthcare workers and other approved areas with task-specific hazards determined by OESO.	

## Use and care of face coverings

### Putting on the face covering/disposable mask:

- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to handling the face covering/disposable mask.
- Ensure the face-covering/disposable mask fits over the nose and under the chin.
- Situate the face-covering/disposable mask properly with nose wire snug against the nose (where applicable).
- Tie straps behind the head and neck or loop around the ears.
- Throughout the process: Avoid touching the front of the face covering/disposable mask.

### Taking off the face covering/disposable mask:

- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when removing the face covering/disposable mask.
- When taking off the face covering/disposable mask, loop your finger into the strap and pull the strap away from the ear, or untie the straps.
- Wash hands immediately after removing.

### Care, storage, and laundering:

- Keep face coverings/disposable mask stored in a paper bag when not in use.
- Cloth face coverings may not be used more than one day at a time and must be washed after use. Cloth face coverings should be properly laundered with regular clothing detergent before first

use, and after each shift. Cloth face coverings should be replaced immediately if soiled, damaged (e.g. ripped, punctured) or visibly contaminated.

- Disposable masks must not be used for more than one day and should be placed in the trash after your shift or if it is soiled, damaged (e.g., stretched ear loops, torn or punctured material) or visibly contaminated.

### Social Distancing

Keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to the COVID-19 virus and slowing its spread. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others when possible, even if you have no symptoms. Social distancing is important for everyone, especially to help protect people who are at higher risk of getting very sick. Employees working on-site should follow these social distancing practices:

- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people at all times
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gathering

### Handwashing

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash your hands after touching your face.

### Gloves

Healthcare workers and others in high-risk areas should use gloves as part of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), but according to the CDC, gloves are not necessary for general use and do not replace good hand hygiene. Washing your hands often is considered the best practice for common everyday tasks.

### Goggles/Face Shields

Employees do not need to wear goggles or face shields as part of general activity on campus. Good hand hygiene and avoiding touching your face are generally sufficient for non- healthcare environments.

### Personal Disinfection

While custodial crews will continue to clean office and work spaces based on CDC guidelines, additional care should be taken to wipe down commonly used surfaces. Before starting work and before you leave any room in which you have been working, you must wipe down all work areas with EPA-registered 60% alcohol solution. This includes any shared-space location or equipment (e.g. copiers, printers, computers, A/V and other electrical equipment, coffee makers, desks and tables, light switches, door knobs, etc.).

## Coughing/Sneezing Hygiene

If you are in a private setting and do not have on your cloth face covering, remember to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Then throw used tissues in the trash. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

## Guidance for Specific Workplace Scenarios

### Working in Office Environments

If you work in an open environment, be sure to maintain at least 6 feet distance from co-workers. If possible have at least one workspace separating you from another co-worker. You should wear a face mask or face covering at all times while in a shared work space/room.

Departments should assess open work environments and meeting rooms to institute measures to physically separate and increase distance between employees, other coworkers, and customers, such as:

Place visual cues such as floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate to customers where they should stand while waiting in line.

Place one-way directional signage for large open work spaces with multiple through-ways to increase distance between employees moving through the space.

Consider designating specific stairways for up or down traffic if building space allows.

If you work in an office, no more than one person should be in the same room unless the required 6 feet of distancing can be consistently maintained. If more than one person is in a room, masks/face coverings should be worn at all times.

Masks/face coverings should be worn by any employees in a reception/receiving area. Masks/face coverings should be used when inside any UHCL facility where others are present, including walking in narrow hallways where others travel and in break rooms, conference rooms and other meeting locations.

### Using Restrooms

Use of restrooms should be limited based on size to ensure at least 6 feet distance between individuals. Wash your hands thoroughly afterward to reduce the potential transmission of the virus.

### Using Elevators

No more than one person may enter an elevator at a time, so please use the stairs whenever possible. If you are using the elevator, wear your mask or face covering and avoid touching the elevator buttons with your exposed hand/fingers, if possible. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol upon departing the elevator.

## Meetings

Convening in groups increases the risk of viral transmission. Where feasible, meetings should be held in whole or part using the extensive range of available remote collaboration tools (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, telephone, etc.).

In person meetings are limited to the restrictions of local, state and federal orders and should not exceed 50 percent of a rooms capacity, assuming individuals can still maintain 6 feet of separation for social distancing requirements. Departments should remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in meeting rooms to support social distancing practices between attendees.

During your time on-site, you are encouraged to communicate with your colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, instant message, telephone or other available technology rather than face-to-face. You can also use a range of available collaboration tools (e.g. Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Jabber, etc.).

## Meals

Before and after eating, you should wash your hands thoroughly to reduce the potential transmission of the virus.

If dining on campus, you should wear your mask or face covering until you are ready to eat and then replace it afterward. Eating establishments must meet requirements to allow at least 6 feet of distance between each customer, including lines and seating arrangements. Individuals should not sit facing one another. Employees are encouraged to take food back to their office area or eat outside, if this is reasonable for your situation.

If you are eating in your work environment (break room, office, etc.), maintain 6 feet distance between you and others. Individuals should not sit facing one another. Only remove your mask or face covering in order to eat, then put it back on. Departments should remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in employee break rooms to support social distancing practices between employees. Wipe all surfaces, including table, refrigerator handle, coffee machine, etc. after using in common areas.

## Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** UHCL provides a comprehensive Employee Assistance Program to benefits-eligible employees (both staff and faculty) and their eligible household dependents. All EAP services are provided at no cost and are confidential. Services are designed to help employees and their families overcome life's challenges when they might arise. To access services:

- Call 713 500-3327, or
- Explore the EAP website at [www.mylifevalues.com](http://www.mylifevalues.com)
  - Username: UHS
  - Password: UHS

**BlueCross BlueShield** (Employee HealthSelect of Texas medical insurance plan): [BCBS Mental Health page](#).

**LinkedIn Learning:** Videos on a variety of topics, such as wellness, mental health, and working remotely are available. Users will need to first activate their license to access the site. Visit our [HR Training Page](#) for activation instructions and website links.

**UHCL Counseling Services:** [Counseling Services](#) continues to offer confidential consultation services to all employees (both staff and faculty). You can contact them at 281-283-2580, to take advantage of this service.

## Enter/Exit Control

Entry to buildings will be regulated and monitored. Your UHCL card/badge is required for entry to all buildings, and you may not hold or prop open exterior doors for any other person.

Visitors, trainees, guests are not allowed on worksites.

Violation of these guidelines may result in the immediate revocation of building access privileges.