

COVID-19: Leaves of Absence
Quick Reference Guide for HR Departmental Contacts
Revised 8/22/2022

Important Human Resources Updates

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES SURROUNDING ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE?

The CDC has modified isolation and quarantine guidelines as follows.

- Isolation:
 - All individuals who test positive for COVID-19 can end their isolation after 5 days if they are asymptomatic. Day 0 is considered the first day of symptom onset and/or the day of a positive test result. A mask should be worn through day 10.
- Quarantine:
 - Individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 should wear a mask for 10 full days after exposure, watch for symptoms, and get tested at least 5 full days after exposure.

Full details can be found on the [CDC website](#).

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CU EMPLOYEE TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID?

1. Employees with a positive test result should inform their department of their positive test result so that the Department is able to plan for the absence, based on the isolation guidance the employee receives from their healthcare provider.
2. Employees able to continue working remotely should confirm their plans with their department. Employees either unable to work remotely due to their type of work or too ill to work will be eligible for quarantine pay as defined in the policies below under **NYS Paid Sick Leave for Mandatory or Precautionary Quarantine**. Quarantine payment is separate from regular sick days and is not charged to the sick bank or salary continuation.
3. Employees should be reminded to send their positive test result to Columbia Health at covidtesttrace@columbia.edu.
4. Columbia Health will send a confirmation email to the employee providing guidance on isolation and return to work. This will be the only correspondence sent out to the employee, who should share it with their supervisor or local HR if they are required to and cannot return to campus.
5. Leave Management does not need copy of the results, but are available to the Department or Employee if there are questions.
6. Employees not able to return to work within the typical 5 days of isolation should contact leavemanagement@columbia.edu for further guidance. Documentation from a physician may be requested.

HOW DOES AN EMPLOYEE KNOW WHEN TO RETURN TO WORK?

- More than five days have passed since the onset of symptoms or the date of the positive test (where day 0 is the day of symptom onset or (if asymptomatic) the day of collection of the first positive specimen).
- Have had no fever within the past 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Other symptoms have improved.

Additional Information to Consider:

Q. WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE IS SICK?

A. An employee sick with a fever and/or respiratory symptoms should not report to work. Time off due to sickness should generally be treated as a standard sick absence, unless the employee's sickness is related to COVID-19 (see specific leave provisions below which cover COVID-related absences). Medical documentation may be required. You should work with Leave Management. Specific questions about how to code an employee's absence should be directed to your HR Business Partner/Leave Management.

Keep in mind, employees should contact their healthcare provider if they have questions specific to their own situation or experience fever, cough and have difficulty breathing, their healthcare professional will determine if they need to be tested for COVID-19.

Applicable Laws/Policies include:

1. Sick Leave (including Officer Salary Continuation and Sick Time for SupportStaff)

- a. Employees use salary continuation/sick leave if unable to work due to illness.
- b. Information for HR Departmental Contacts available via the [HR Manager Toolkit](#).
- c. Information for Employees available via the [Workplace Essentials](#) website.
- d. Note: New York State Disability still applies. Employees will continue to file claims for NYS Disability, if eligible.

2. New York State Disability (Managed by Cigna/NYLife)

- a. Contact Cigna/NYLife by Phone: 888-842-4462, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday; or
- b. Online: www.cigna.com/customer-forms (no username/password)
- c. Note: 1199 Clerical and Cafeteria employees should call the Benefit Fund's Member Service to file a claim, not Cigna.

3. Family and Medical Leave of Absence (FMLA):

- a. A medical leave of absence still runs concurrent with FMLA, if eligible.
- b. Note: Based on our size, there are no new FMLA guidelines associated with COVID-19 that are applicable to the University.
- c. For more information, please see the [FMLA policy](#) in the University Policy Library.

4. NYS Paid Sick Leave for Mandatory or Precautionary Quarantine:

- a. A 14-calendar day period of paid sick leave is available, and is in addition to other available sick leave for all employees that have tested positive for COVID-19, or presumed positive as indicated by positive test results or a note from their physician. Documentation is required.
- b. For more information, see the [New York State Paid Family Leave for COVID-19](#) website.

5. NYS Safe and Sick Leave:

- a. Columbia University provides eligible employees in New York State with up to 56 hours of paid safe and sick time annually, pursuant to the New York State Sick Leave law (NYSSL) and the New York City Earned Safe and Sick Time Act (ESSTA).
- b. Employees may use New York State Safe and Sick Leave for employee's own illness. Note: Other States and NYS counties have relevant laws, please review the [Leave of Absence: All States' Leave Laws](#) in the University Policy Library.
- c. The [NYS Safe and Sick Leave policy](#) is available on the University Policy website.

Q. WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE MUST REMAIN HOME TO CARE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS WHO ARE ILL/OR IN QUARANTINE?

A. Employees are advised to contact their manager and/or their HR Department Contact to discuss available leave options including:

1. New York State Paid Family Leave (PFL):

- a. Provides eligible employees with job-protected, partial paid leave up to 12 weeks in 2022.
- b. PFL is available to employees working in New York State who have satisfied the eligibility requirements of either: a) working for at least 26 consecutive weeks if regularly working 20 hours or more per week or b) worked for at least 175 days if working less than 20 hours per week.
- c. **COVID- 19 Special Guidance for PFL:** If you are an eligible employee whose dependent child is under a mandatory or precautionary order of quarantine or isolation, you may be able to take Paid Family Leave. For more information, please view the [FAQs on the NY State website](#).
- d. COVID-19 Leave for a sick family member: A 14-calendar day period of paid sick leave is available, and is in addition to other available leave taken to care for a sick family member. Documentation is required. Leave may not extend beyond a 14-calendar day period, but within the 14-day period may be taken continuously or intermittently. Employees may use documentation from their healthcare provider, or an order of quarantine from their local health department. Employees may contact their local health department for instructions on obtaining an order.
- e. Any leave request beyond a 14-calendar day period requires coordination with Cigna to file a NYS Paid Family Leave (PFL) claim and completion of FMLA paperwork. PFL, FMLA and NYC Safe and Sick Leave will run concurrently.
- f. Note: If an employee works outside of New York State, other states have relevant laws. Please review the [Leave of Absence: All States' Leave Laws](#) in the University Policy Library.

2. FMLA:

- a. This leave of absence is available to help care for an eligible family member with a serious health condition.
- b. FMLA provides eligible employees with a job-protected, unpaid leave of up to 12 weeks.
- c. Normal FMLA rules apply and there is no special COVID-19 guidance for an employer our size. Documentation is required.
- d. For more information, please see the [FMLA policy](#) in the University Policy Library.

3. NYS Safe and Sick Leave:

- a. Columbia University provides eligible employees in New York State with up to 56 hours of paid safe and sick time annually, pursuant to the New York State Sick Leave law (NYSSL) and the New York City Earned Safe and Sick Time Act (ESSTA).
- b. Employees may use New York State Safe and Sick Leave for illness or preventative care of one's family members.
- c. The [NYS Safe and Sick Leave policy](#) is available on the University Policy website.
- d. Note: If an employee works outside of New York State, other states have relevant laws. Please review the [Leave of Absence: All States' Leave Laws](#) in the University Policy Library.

4. Emergency Days from Columbia University

- a. The University recognizes some employees who have assigned tasks or alternative assignments may, from time to time, find themselves unable to perform this work because of school closures, lack of available child care, or similar external challenges related to COVID-19.
- b. Full-time and regular part-time employees hired prior to January 1, 2021, are provided up to 10 paid work days of emergency absence time in these situations, in addition to any other available leave benefits under our existing University policies (including up to 56 hours under the New York City Earned Safe and Sick Time Act).
- c. Employees should submit requests for an emergency absence to their managers. We will consider requests for an emergency absence in half-day or full-day increments.
- d. Approved emergency absences will be paid based on the employee's regular scheduled hours and regular rate of pay.
- e. Employees may continue to use Emergency Days in 2022 provided that their allotment still remains. A new allotment will not be allocated.

5. Vacation/Personal Leave

- a. May be requested, and is subject to review and approval.
- b. A personal leave is an unpaid leave generally used in situations not covered by other types of University or federal/state/local laws or additional time provided beyond said laws. Please review the [Personal Leaves](#) section of the HR website.

Q. WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE IS IN A HIGH-RISK GROUP FOR COVID-19. WHAT SHOULD THEY DO?

A. If they believe that they are in a high-risk group, they should reach out to their supervisor or Departmental HR. Documentation, from an authorized treatment provider, of the underlying medical condition that prompted the request will be required to be processed and reviewed with Leave Management. These cases will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis based on the specific facts and circumstances.

Additional Online Resources:

- Information for HR Departmental Contacts: [HR Manager Toolkit](#)
- Information for Employees: [Workplace Essentials](#)

Q. HOW DO I PROCESS A PAF FOR LEAVES OF ABSENCE, INCLUDING A LEAVE RELATED TO COVID-19?

A. To process a leave please follow the [PAF Processing Guidelines](#). Please note that there are 2 new codes for the paid leave available for employees that utilize the quarantine leave for their own COVID-19 illness or to take care of a sick family member with COVID-19. Documentation is required.

- PLA/COS: COVID self-illness
- PLA/CCO: COVID Other Family Illness.