

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Influenza (flu)

*This document will be updated as additional questions come to our attention. Please revisit it regularly.*

## General Questions -- All Employees

**Where can I find the latest information about Influenza and the situation at the University of Central Florida?**

- UCF Health Services at <http://www.hs.sdes.ucf.edu>
- UCF Emergency Management <http://emergency.ucf.edu>
- UCF Human Resources Department <http://www.hr.ucf.edu>
- UCF Newsroom (UCF Today): Update for UCF Community at <http://news.ucf.edu>

**What are the symptoms of Influenza?**

The symptoms of influenza usually include fever and headache plus at least either cough or sore throat. Influenza infection can also lead to additional symptoms like exhaustion, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, chills, diarrhea, and vomiting. Seasonal flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. When severe, pneumonia, respiratory failure and even death are possible.

**Are flu screenings available on campus for Faculty and Staff?**

If you are experiencing influenza-like symptoms you are advised to contact your primary care physician for evaluation. Faculty and Staff who are insured with Florida Blue (BCBS), Aetna or AVMED may request an appointment for care at our campus UCF Health Services facility by calling 407-823-3850 or through Pegasus Health at 407-266-3627.

**I have a staff member who has asked to wear a facemask when meeting with students, staff, and customers. How do I respond?**

As a general precaution, wearing a facemask is not medically necessary. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that in areas where the Influenza virus has been confirmed, and close contact (within 6 feet) with others cannot be avoided, facemasks may reduce the risk of getting influenza. They should be used along with other preventative measures.

**What preventative measures should I encourage employees to take?**

Encourage all persons to effectively cover their cough or sneeze and use good hand hygiene.

- Hand washing facilities including running water and liquid hand soap should be readily accessible; alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be used if hands are not visibly soiled.
- Plan ahead to ensure that enough alcohol-based hand sanitizers are available for situations where it is known that hand washing facilities may not be available, for example during hikes.
- Regularly clean all areas and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact (such as doorknobs, faucets, and, handrails) and also immediately when visibly soiled.

## **I meet with students, staff, and customers as part of my job responsibilities. What should I do if I encounter someone who is obviously sick?**

As with all forms of contagious illnesses such as colds and flu, maintaining a reasonable distance from the person is a starting point. Do not shake hands or make other physical contact. Use a sanitary wipe after the person has left to wipe those areas of your work station that the person has touched. There may be situations in which the meeting can be re-scheduled to a time when the person is feeling better or the business can be conducted by phone or e-mail. Do not hesitate to offer this suggestion if it is appropriate.

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## **Time Off and Pay When the Campus Remains Open**

### **What should I do if I develop influenza symptoms?**

If you become ill with flu-like symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, runny nose, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, contact your primary care physician, who will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.

#### **If you are ill:**

- Notify your supervisor that you are ill and will not be able to work.
- Stay home as directed by your physician or until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever, or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Avoid contact with other people and avoid social gatherings as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.
- When coughing or sneezing, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue and then throw the tissue away. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

### **When can I return to work if I have had the flu?**

You should stay home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever, or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

### **If an employee is sent home, or stays home from work due to illness, how will he/she be paid?**

The following options are available although not all options will be available in all situations depending upon the nature of the job responsibilities and the extent of the illness:

- Use accrued leave; for example, Sick Leave then Annual Leave.
- Use accrued Compensatory time (USPS non-exempt staff only).
- Make up the work on an hour-for-hour basis during the same workweek for USPS and OPS hourly employees with supervisory approval. UCF's workweek begins at 12:00 a.m. on Friday and ends at 11:59 p.m. on the following Thursday.
- Faculty or A&P may make-up the work on an hour-for-hour basis during the same pay period with supervisory approval, or if absent for a full work day, may use accrued leave.
- Work from home with supervisory approval
- Request a Leave without Pay for up to nine days with supervisory approval. If an employee is out more than 10 days, the employee will need to request a Medical Leave of Absence. The

Medical Request Leave Form is located at <http://hr.ucf.edu/files/MedicalLeaveRequestForm.pdf>

- Note: OPS hourly employees do not receive pay for time not worked. OPS hourly employees do not accrue leave or paid time off days.

**Do I have to use my own accrued leave if my supervisor sends me home even though I think I'm well enough to work?**

Yes, you must use your own accrued leave or request an absence without pay. Depending upon the nature of your illness and your job responsibilities, you may be able to make up the work in the same workweek, or work from home with supervisory approval.

**I don't have enough leave to cover my absence from work due to the flu. How can I afford to stay home until I am completely well before returning to work?**

To minimize the potential exposure to others, it is very important that you do not return to work until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever, or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

The following options are available although not all options will be available in all situations depending upon the nature of the job responsibilities, the extent of the illness, and supervisor approval:

- Make up the work on an hour-for-hour basis during the same workweek for USPS and OPS hourly employees with supervisory approval. UCF's workweek begins at 12:00 a.m. on Friday and ends at 11:59 p.m. on the following Thursday.
- Faculty or A&P may make-up the work on an hour-for-hour basis during the same pay period with supervisory approval.
- Work from home with supervisory approval.
- Request a Leave without Pay for up to ten (10) days with supervisory approval. If an employee is out more than 10 days, the employee will need to request a Medical Leave of Absence. The Medical Request Leave Form and UCF Certification of Health Care Provider Form is located at <http://hr.ucf.edu/files/MedicalLeaveRequestForm.pdf> and <http://hr.ucf.edu/files/CertificationHealthCareProviderEmployee.pdf>

**I have an employee who is ill and has come into work. I'm concerned about the potential for exposure to other people. Can I send this employee home?**

Yes. Of greatest concern is an employee with a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit and a cough; this employee should definitely be sent home. Other symptoms (coughing, sneezing) may also be of concern; the decision to send an employee home who is exhibiting these symptoms is to be made on a case-by-case basis. Management has the right to maintain an orderly, safe workplace and a supervisor may make the decision to send an employee home.

In addition, advise employees of the basic preventative measures (practice good hygiene, including frequent hand washing, covering your nose and mouth with your sleeve if you cough or sneeze, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands) and post flu flyers throughout your work areas.

Flyers are available at [http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/everyday\\_preventive.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/everyday_preventive.pdf)

**May I choose to go home if I don't want to be exposed to a sick coworker who isn't sent home?**

Yes, with supervisory approval you may leave work; however, you must use your own accrued leave or request a Leave without Pay and without leave accruals. With your supervisor's approval, making up the work in the same workweek, working a different schedule, or working from home may be options available to you.

**I'm not sick, but I don't want to come to work for fear of becoming ill. Is my supervisor required to approve my request for time off?**

You may request to take Annual Leave; however, your supervisor is not required to approve your time off request, especially if your department is short staffed. It is important to educate yourself about the flu virus and its transmission. Visit the UCF web sites listed at the top of this FAQ document.

**During a flu outbreak can my supervisor cancel my annual leave request that has already been approved?**

Yes, your supervisor has the authority to cancel any pre-approved leave request, especially in circumstances where there are serious staffing shortages as a result of illness. Your leave can also be cancelled if you have been designated as essential personnel due to the nature of your job responsibilities. The term "essential" is the same as "emergency" referenced in the UCF policies.

**My child's school (day care) is closed due to an incident of the flu and my child is not sick. I have no other child care arrangements. Can I bring him to work with me?**

Bringing a child to work is not recommended or advisable—and in many work areas it is prohibited. Decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the dean or department head. Employees should seek to use accrued or unpaid leave to care for family members that need attention.

**My child's school (day care) is closed due to an incident of the flu, and my child is not sick. I have no other child care arrangements and must stay home with him. How will I be paid?**

Promptly notify your supervisor of the reason for your absence and your anticipated return to work date. In this situation, the following options are available although not all options will be available in all situations depending upon the nature of your job responsibilities:

- Use accrued Annual leave.
- Use accrued Compensatory time (USPS non-exempt staff only).
- Make up the work on an hour-for-hour basis during the same workweek for USPS and OPS hourly employees with supervisory approval. UCF's workweek begins at 12:00 a.m. on Friday and ends at 11:59 p.m. on the following Thursday.
- Faculty or A&P may make-up the work on an hour-for-hour basis during the same pay period with supervisory approval, or if absent for a full work day, may use accrued leave.
- Work from home with supervisory approval.
- Request a Leave without Pay for up to 10 days with supervisory approval. If an employee is out more than 10 days the employee will need to request a Leave of Absence.

Note: OPS hourly employees do not receive pay for time not worked. OPS hourly employees do not accrue leave or paid time off days.

**Does FMLA apply if I contract the flu? Does FMLA apply if my spouse or child contracts flu, and I must stay home to care for him/her?**

In most cases yes, provided the employee and family member meets the eligibility requirements. A qualifying condition is one that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility or continuing treatment by a healthcare provider. The continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than 3 consecutive calendar days combined with at least two visits to a healthcare provider or one visit and a regime of continuing treatment. If you are out for more than 10 days you must submit a Medical Leave Request Form and a UCF Certification of Health Care provider forms.

FMLA requires the university to provide up to 12 weeks or 480 hours of unpaid job protected leave to an eligible employee to care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition; or for a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job. An employee is entitled to FMLA if they have worked for the University for at least one year and have worked 1250 hours in the previous 12 months. Accrued leave may be used for all or part of the period to stay in paid status.

FMLA medical leave information and resources are available at:

[http://www.hr.ucf.edu/web/loa\\_wc/leaveattendance.shtml](http://www.hr.ucf.edu/web/loa_wc/leaveattendance.shtml)

OPS employees are entitled to FMLA if they meet the eligibility requirements.

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## **Time Off and Pay when parts of the campus are closed or some or all classes are cancelled**

### **If the building I work in is closed, can I work if I don't have the flu virus?**

If you are affected by a building or unit closure or cancellation of classes, you will be assigned an alternative work assignment or location if possible. If no alternative work assignment or location is available, the affected full-time employees who were scheduled to work and were not at work solely because of the adverse working conditions will incur no loss of pay and will not be required to cover any absences due to the closing. If an alternative work assignment or location is available and you choose not to accept it, you will have to cover the time away from work with Annual Leave or Leave without Pay if your Annual Leave hours are exhausted, USPS non-exempt may use compensatory hours if available.

### **If classes are cancelled but the campus is not closed, what options are available for me if I do not want to work?**

If your unit is open and you choose not to work, you may request to use accrued annual leave; however, your supervisor is not required to approve your time off request if your department is short staffed. If your leave hours are exhausted or you are a 9-month faculty member, your absence will be without pay and without leave accruals. It is important to educate yourself about the flu and its transmission. Visit the University's emergency preparedness web sites listed at the top of this document.

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## Employee Services

### **What assistance is available to me to help me cope with the emotional impact of an influenza outbreak?**

UCF provides resources to help benefits-eligible employees and their dependents cope with these types of life events through its Employee Assistance Program (EAP), administered by Aetna Resources for Living. Call 407-788-8822 or (toll free) 1-800-272-7252 or visit them online at <http://new.mylifevalues.com/login.aspx> (login/password is UCF). The EAP provides confidential, short-term counseling at no cost to the employee.

## Work Schedules/Alternative Worksites

### **Does my supervisor have to approve my request to telecommute if there is an influenza outbreak?**

Supervisory approval is necessary to work from home, but not all requests to telecommute can be approved. Not every position is suitable for telecommuting due to specific job duties that cannot be performed at home or the operating requirements of the unit.

### **Can my supervisor schedule me to work hours or shifts that I normally do not work?**

Yes, because it qualifies as an emergency situation, you may be asked to work more hours or different hours than normal, especially if you have been designated as an essential personnel employee or the university is short staffed as a result of the influenza outbreak. We will attempt to provide advance notice if possible.

### **If a large number of employees are unable to come to work because of the influenza outbreak, are there a maximum number of overtime hours my supervisor can require me to work?**

In the event of a serious influenza outbreak, we may all be needed to work differently to ensure the university continues to function. You may be asked to work more hours or different hours than normal, especially if you have been designated as essential personnel or the university is short staffed as a result of the influenza outbreak. Supervisors will make efforts to permit employees to take rest periods and may use their discretion in scheduling additional breaks for employees working additional hours.

## Health Insurance

### **Will my state-sponsored healthcare plan cover medical expenses associated with treatment for influenza?**

Yes, you will have the same coverage that is currently available for any emergency or non-emergency illness and flu shots are a covered immunization vaccine under the Aetna, AvMed, and Florida Blue plans. For additional coverage details visit your plan benefits summary:

Aetna: <http://www.aetnastateflorida.com/>

AvMed: <https://www.avmed.org/Group%20Members/Custom/State/index.aspx>

Florida Blue: <http://www.bcbsfl.com/>

To contact your insurance carrier, please visit the Benefits Vendor Contact Sheet at [http://mybenefits.myflorida.com/health/contact\\_information](http://mybenefits.myflorida.com/health/contact_information)

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## **Time Off and Pay when the campus is closed**

### **If the entire campus is closed due to an influenza outbreak, how will I be paid?**

According to university regulation UCF-3.035, the University President or designee may close all or part of the university upon the occurrence of an emergency which affects its operations.

If a decision is made to close the university prior to the beginning of the normal workday, every effort will be made to disseminate this information to affected employees by 6:00 a.m. through local radio and television stations by the Director of UCF's News & Information.

If the university is closed, OPS hourly employees shall be granted Leave without Pay, USPS employees should be granted administrative leave, and Faculty and A&P employees should be granted leave with pay for the period of the closing.

Full-time (1 FTE) employees will receive a maximum of 8 hours for each day granted. Part-time (less than 1 FTE), will receive proportionate hours for each day granted. An employee may only use the amount of granted leave that is necessary to bring the employee's hours up to the 40 hours for the workweek. If an employee's work hours when combined with the granted leave, do not equal 40, an employee should use accumulated leave or Leave without Pay to bring their balance for the workweek to 40 hours. Such leave should be documented on USPS, A&P and Faculty's Leave and Pay Exception Report.

Employees who were on a prior approved leave of absence or on any previously approved, scheduled leave should not have the leave changed to administrative leave or leave with pay.

### **How will I be paid if the campus is closed for an extended period and I would have been at work if the campus was open?**

University administration will evaluate the situation and make a determination whether staff will continue to be paid without using their own accrued leave hours. If this pay provision is not continued and employees must use their own time, the following options are available:

- Use accrued Annual Leave (not available for 9-month faculty)
- Use accrued Compensatory time (USPS non-exempt only)
- Work from home with supervisory approval

Staff without accrued leave will receive Leave without Pay. Such leave should be documented on the Leave and Pay Exception Report.

Note: OPS hourly employees do not receive pay for time not worked. OPS hourly employees do not accrue leave or paid time off days.

**I have been identified as essential personnel, and I am required to work when the campus is closed during an influenza outbreak. How will I be paid?**

If employees assigned to a closed facility have been provided leave as a result of the closing, USPS employees who are assigned to that facility, and who are required to report for work in order to provide essential services during the closing, should be granted compensatory leave to cover the hours worked in the employees' regularly scheduled work shifts during the period the facility is closed.

Faculty and A&P who are *required* to work when the campus is closed due to an influenza outbreak receive their regular rate of pay.

**How do I know if I've been identified as an "essential personnel" employee?**

The Department heads have been instructed to determine which of their positions are deemed essential for work duty, and employees in those positions must complete and sign an Essential Personnel Designation and Notification Form. If you do not recall if you have been identified as an essential personnel employee, contact your supervisor.

**I have an employee who has not been previously identified as essential personnel and was not required to work. He was not aware the campus was closed, and he came into work. What should I do?**

The campus is closed to all those who are not required to work and the employee is to be sent home. Employees will be paid for the day without charging the absence to Leave hours.

Full-time (1 FTE) employees will receive a maximum of 8 hours for each day granted. Part-time (less than 1 FTE), will receive proportionate hours for each day granted. An employee may only use the amount of granted leave that is necessary to bring the employee's hours up to the 40 hours for the workweek. If an employee's work hours when combined with the granted leave do not equal 40, an employee should use accumulated leave or Leave without Pay to bring their balance for the workweek to 40 hours. Such leave should be documented on USPS, A&P and Faculty's Leave and Pay Exception Report.

Note: OPS hourly employees do not receive pay for time not worked. OPS hourly employees do not accrue leave or paid time off days.

**I have an employee who was identified as essential personnel, but did not report to work when needed. What should I do?**

If the employee was aware they had been designated as essential personnel and the expectations involved with this designation, talk with them to find out why they didn't come to work as required. If their explanation is not reasonable given the situation, corrective or disciplinary action may be an option. Contact the Employee Relations Manager in the Human Resources Office at 823-2771.

**Can I come into work even though the campus is closed?**

Closing the campus is an exceptionally rare event that occurs only in extreme circumstances. It is a decision that is made to protect the health and safety of faculty, staff, and students. Do not come into work unless you have been identified as essential personnel who are required to work during this type of emergency event. If you are not an essential personnel and do come into work, you will be sent home.

**I am an OPS employee. How will I be paid when the campus is closed due to an influenza outbreak?**

If you are *required* to work when the campus is closed due to an influenza outbreak you will receive pay for the hours worked. If you are not required to work, you will not be paid for the time away from work.