

Human Resources

The Office of Human Resources has been working with the H1N1 taskforce to advise faculty, staff, and student workers, on policies and procedures to guide managers and employees during influenza-like illnesses. When it comes to the H1N1 suspected flu, supervisors are encouraged to be flexible in managing employees' use of sick leave. Employees must communicate with their supervisor if they suspect their illness is due to the flu. Other sections of this web-site have specific suggestions for employees, students, and other concerned parties.

In general, an employee who feels ill with flu symptoms at work should notify their supervisor and plan to go home. Influenza-like illness is considered as fever, cough and/or a sore throat.

Employees with influenza-like illness or caring for a covered person should use accrued sick leave for the duration of the illness. If an employee does not have a sick leave balance available, they are permitted to substitute sick leave with accrued vacation, or compensatory time as outlined by their respective collective bargaining agreements or take leave without pay. Faculty do not have vacation but earn up to three personnel leave days.

During the pandemic, influenza-like illness is considered as a qualifying event for the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). However, certification from a medical provider is generally not required.

If an employee is exhibiting symptoms of influenza-like illness, a supervisor may direct an employee to leave the workplace. This should only occur when the employee is exhibiting such symptoms. If directed to go home due to influenza-like symptoms, the supervisor should count the leave as MSL (Administrative Leave) and not deduct the leave from the employee's sick leave balance for missing part of work that day only. Any illness due to the flu extending beyond the day that the employee was sent home by the supervisor must be accounted for by sick leave, vacation, or compensatory time previously earned. If the employee refuses to leave the workplace voluntarily, the employee should be given a direct order and informed that their refusal is placing co-workers in jeopardy and refusing to leave will subject them to possible disciplinary action.

An employee may return to work once he/she has been without a fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, aspirin or naproxen. The time period for staying out of work applies even if the employee is put on antiviral medication or has a negative flu test.

A medical note to return to work relating to influenza will not be required during the pandemic except for previously defined cases.

If an employee is caring for their dependent child whose daycare is closed due to H1N1, the employee may request sick leave for this unique situation through their supervisor.

If offices are short-staffed due to H1N1 illness, other staff may be asked to assist with coverage. However, supervisors may consult with the Office of Human Resources so these situations can be reviewed on an individual basis.

Again, healthy employees, who are not caring for an ill family member, are expected to work each day, and ill or suspected ill employees are expected to stay home--not come to work and then go home (putting other employees or students at increased risk.)

Notes to Supervisors:

Employee's Daily Self-Assessment of Health

If an employee begins to feel ill at work or if someone observes that another employee is exhibiting symptoms of influenza at work, the ill employee should return to his/her workstation and call or email their supervisor.

Instructions for Employees Who Are Experiencing Flu-like Symptoms

The employee who feels ill should remain at their work station and immediately notify their supervisor. They should avoid contact with co-workers and have conversations by phone or email. Employees should then be provided with a tissue or surgical mask (if available), leave the work station immediately, and go home.

Instruction to Supervisors

If presented with an ill employee, the supervisor should ask the employee if he/she is experiencing influenza-like illness as:

Fever greater or equal to 100° or is feverish since a thermometer may not be available, and a cough or sore throat. If an employee has these symptoms, the supervisor should inform the employee to cover his/her mouth and nose with a tissue (or surgical mask, if available). This is to help protect other staff. The employee should be advised to leave work immediately and to avoid using public transportation. If the employee is at higher risk for complications from influenza, they should contact their health care provider to determine if antiviral medication is necessary.

Compensation

Employees with influenza-like illness or caring for someone with influenza-like illness may use sick leave. If an employee does not have accumulated paid leave, work from home is possible with supervisor's approval. With their supervisor's approval, employees may be able to make up the lost time in certain situations.

Recovered Employee's Return to Work:

An employee may return to work once he/she has been without fever for 24 hours and without fever-reducing medications such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, aspirin, or naproxen. An employee who is caring for someone else who is ill with influenza-like illness should follow the guidelines for how long the individual should stay home which can be found at www.mdhflu.gov.

Sample Language When Directing Employees to Leave the Workplace

You are being asked to go home, as you are displaying influenza-like illness. Influenza viruses are spread easily from person to person, and our goal is to limit the spread as much as possible. As a result, we request that you leave the workplace immediately and stay home, except to receive medical care. You will be on full payroll status for the remainder of this work day. After today, you may use sick leave, vacation leave (except faculty), or compensatory time.

Supervisors, if you have this situation come up please contact Human Resources for further instructions.