

Southwestern University
Procedures for Handling Reports of Potential COVID-19 Exposure
or Confirmed COVID-19 Infection
For Faculty and Staff Members

If a faculty or staff member learns that they have been potentially exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or they have tested positive for COVID-19, they should immediately inform their department chair and Dean of the Faculty (“DOF”) (for faculty) or their supervisor (for staff) to alert them of their anticipated absence from work (it is not required to disclose the reason) and either remain at home or go home. They should then contact the Human Resources (“HR”) department to confidentially discuss their situation, to begin the contact tracing process, and to learn what the University will require of them prior to returning to work. In general, the University will follow the most current CDC guidance regarding appropriate [self-quarantine](#) and [self-isolation](#) protocols.

If the faculty or staff member chooses to disclose the reason for their anticipated absence to their department chair/DOF or supervisor, and if it is possible, the department chair/DOF or supervisor should ask the person if they have come into close contact with anyone on campus since the time they were potentially exposed. If the faculty or staff member has been confirmed to have COVID-19, they will likely be contacted by a representative from their local county health department to discuss the case further and to help identify close contacts. The county representative may also periodically call the member to check on health status and to reemphasize health and isolation protocols. The [CDC guidance regarding “close contact”](#) is as follows:

“Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.”

Please note that the local county health department may have a different definition of "close contact," which should also be considered.

Once the faculty or staff member (or the department chair/DOF/supervisor) have notified the HR department, the Associate Vice President for HR (“AVPHR”) will notify the appropriate Senior Staff member about the potential exposure. The Senior Staff member will authorize any communications regarding the potential exposure after conferring with the AVPHR and will designate the representative who will disseminate those communications.

The AVPHR will forward the appropriate communication formats to the designated representative and serve as a resource to complete the communication process. The AVPHR will also assist the designated representative to contact the Facilities Services Manager to determine whether any custodial team members may have been potentially exposed to the work area/spaces and also to request that the appropriate cleaning and response protocol be implemented, including contacting the University’s Director of Campus Safety & Risk Management. If any

custodial staff members have been potentially exposed, the Facilities Services Manager will inform them by using the appropriate communication format.

The Benefits Coordinator or other HR representative will follow up with the faculty/staff member during their quarantine/isolation period.

The University will generally follow the CDC guidance regarding self-quarantine, self-isolation, definitions of [clinical recovery and discontinuing home isolation](#), and, together with the University's regular return-to-work procedures from medical-based extended absences, will follow the process below for its faculty and staff:

1. For faculty or staff members who have been confirmed to have COVID-19, they should contact their healthcare provider, particularly if they have underlying health conditions. The University requires them to immediately self-isolate in accordance with the then-published CDC guidance for self-isolation, which currently states: "10 days since symptoms first appeared and 24-hours without fever without fever-reducing medications and COVID-19 symptoms have improved." The University requires a written release from the faculty/staff member's health care provider (or county health agency, or similar health authority) prior to returning to work on campus. During their self-isolation, the faculty/staff member is required to complete the [Daily Health Check](#) They are also encouraged to regularly review the [CDC's Self-Checker](#).

2. For faculty or staff members who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (any individual within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes), they will be required to immediately self-quarantine in accordance with the then-published CDC guidance for self-quarantine, which currently states: "14 days from the last contact with the person who has COVID-19, watch for fever (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19, and, if possible, stay away from others." During their self-quarantine, the faculty/staff member is required to complete the [Daily Health Check](#) They are also encouraged to regularly review the [CDC's Self-Checker](#), and to contact their health care provider and the HR department if they become symptomatic. If they remain asymptomatic for the 14-day period, they may return to work on campus after reviewing their condition with the HR department. The HR department will inform the department chair/supervisor that they have been cleared to return to work.

Also, as part of the University's communication protocols with faculty/staff members who have been confirmed to have COVID-19 and have been in "home isolation" for the duration of their illness/recovery, they will be provided with a written statement which they can share with their healthcare provider that describes the University's requirements regarding their return to work. The University will generally follow the CDC's guidance regarding "clinical recovery" (a symptom-based strategy) and its recommendations for [discontinuing home isolation](#), which currently states the following:

"Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset, and

- At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, and
- Other symptoms have improved.”

The statement will specifically point out that the University does not require a negative COVID-19 test for the faculty/staff member to return to work. It will also invite the healthcare provider to contact the HR department if they have questions or need additional information.

The faculty/staff member should coordinate with the HR department regarding their return to work. The HR department will notify the department chair/DOF, supervisor and the appropriate Senior Staff member when the faculty/staff member has been cleared to return to work (particularly if the faculty/staff member will teach/work on campus).

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