

Human Resources FAQs (VSCS) – Updated March 23, 2020

Please check back frequently as these FAQs will be updated and additional questions and answers will be added as planning for COVID-19 continues. The information below is based upon the information presently known about COVID-19. You are encouraged to check updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Vermont Department of Health (VDH). These FAQs are not intended to cover student workers.

Facilities, Operations and Staffing

1. Are the Colleges closed?

No. The Colleges are not closed. Although instruction is transitioning to virtual learning for students and students have been asked to return home, if possible, the Colleges remain open and employees are expected to **work remotely, if approved to do so, or** report for work as usual, unless and until advised otherwise by their supervisor.

On March 21, 2020, Governor Scott of Vermont announced new community mitigation measures. Certain business, including exercise facilities, are required to close their doors by 8 p.m. on Monday, March 23, 2020. However, at the present time, all other business may remain open, but must follow the Centers for Disease Control guidelines of maintaining a distance of at least six feet between people, ensuring employees practice appropriate hygiene measures, such as washing hands regularly, ensuring that sick employees remain at home and regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces. The Governor has also limited non-essential mass gatherings to no more than 10 people.

2. What should I do if I don't feel well?

If you are feeling unwell and/or showing signs of illness, you should not come to work. You should report to your supervisor and to the Director of Human Resources as soon as possible. Employees should follow the recommended guidelines issued by the CDC and the Vermont Department of Health. Currently, the CDC recommends that employees not return to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F / 37.8° C), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms of illness for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g., cough suppressants).

3. What should I do if I am afraid of coming to work and catching COVID-19?

Generally, if you are not sick, you should report to work and practice respiratory, cough, and sneeze etiquette, wash your hands often with soap and water and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer. You should also practice social distancing, *i.e.* avoid being in close proximity to others, avoid mass gatherings, and maintain a distance of approximately 6 feet from others when possible.

4. What if I have a high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19?

According to the Vermont Department of Health, some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness, including older adults and people with chronic (long-lasting) medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes or lung disease. According to the CDC, starting at age 60, there is an increasing risk of disease and the risk increases with age. The highest risk of serious illness is in people older than 80 years. If you believe that you are at higher risk from

getting very sick, please reach out to your HR Director to discuss your concerns and whether it will be possible for you to work remotely.

5. What should I do if my child's school is closed?

You should reach out to your supervisor and Director of Human Resources to see if you are able to work from home. If not, Vermont law permits an employee to use accrued sick leave if a child's school or day care is closed for public health or safety reasons.

6. What should I do if I want to telework (work remotely from home)?

You cannot decide unilaterally to telework. Employees must work with their supervisors to determine whether telecommuting may be compatible with the employee's job responsibilities, and if so, to coordinate with the Director of Human Resources to put in place a temporary teleworking arrangement. In addition to an employee's job responsibilities, the Colleges will consider how best to allocate limited resources in deciding who may telework. The Colleges are continuing to work through the teleworking requests they have received to date. The Colleges retain the ability to terminate a teleworking agreement at any time.

7. What should I do if I am under a gubernatorial order not to leave my home?

Governor Cuomo in New York has issued an Executive Order, effective Sunday, March 22, 2020, directing that all employees stay at home, excluding those performing essential services. Many of the services provided by VSC employees are considered essential, per Governor Cuomo's order, including places of accommodation, building cleaning and maintenance, auto repair, skilled trades (such as electricians and plumbers), security, janitorial and disinfection work, and technological support for online services. See <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-issues-guidance-essential-services-under-new-york-state-pause-executive-order> for the complete list. If you reside in New York state, you may report to work if your job entails the performance of essential services. If not, please contact your Human Resources Director for further direction.

The VSC will update these FAQs if Governor Scott issues a similar order in Vermont. At this time, see the Answer to Question No. 1 above.

Given how fast things are happening, if you reside outside of Vermont and are affected by a gubernatorial order in your state of residence, please reach out to your Director of Human Resources to discuss the situation.

8. If I am unable to work for any reason, will I still be paid?

Yes. If you are a full-time employee and are unable to work because you are sick, caring for someone who is sick, it is not possible to perform your job remotely, you have child care responsibilities that preclude you from working, or for any other reason connected to the COVID-19 virus, you are asked to enter your time as follows.

When entering your hours worked or requesting to use leave in UltiPro, you can note that your sick leave time or vacation leave time was due to COVID-19. Leave type now includes COVID19-VAC and COVID19-SICK. Please note that your sick leave and vacation buckets will be decreased accordingly. Adding this coding enables you and the VSC to track how much time has been lost due to the COVID-19 virus. Once you have exhausted all leave available to you, the VSC will permit you to run a negative sick leave balance. This will enable you to

continue to be paid. At this time, the VSCS reserves the right to recoup any outstanding sick leave deficit from the final paycheck if an employee leaves the VSCS before regaining a positive sick time balance.

If you are able to work, either remotely or on campus, and choose not to do so, you will need to seek approval from your supervisor to take leave and you should enter your hours worked or request time off as you would normally, *i.e.* do not use the COVID19-VAC or COVID19-SICK leave types.

9. What if I can work part of the day but not the entire day?

If you are able to work part of your day (either remotely or on campus) but not the entire day because you need to spend time caring for your children who would otherwise have been in school or day care, you may use the COVID19-SICK type of leave for the hours that you are not able to work.

COVID-19 Information

1. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The virus manifests as a mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. The CDC currently believes that symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as many as 14 days after exposure.

2. How is COVID-19 transmitted?

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets also land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. The CDC recommends staying as much as 6 feet away from someone who is sick. It is possible to catch the virus from someone even before they have symptoms or are asymptomatic, but little is known about this aspect of the virus at this time.

3. Can the virus spread from contact with infected surfaces or objects?

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

4. How can I protect myself from COVID-19?

The Vermont Department of Health advises that there is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection and so encourages everyone to take everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs. These include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

In addition, the CDC recommends the following for hand hygiene:

Household members should clean hands often, including immediately after removing gloves and after contact with someone who is ill, by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

The World Health Organization has provided the following hand sanitizer recipe:

- 1 cup (250 mL) isopropyl alcohol (91%)
- 1 teaspoon (5 mL) glycerol (or other moisturizer such as aloe vera gel, warm honey or olive oil)
- 2 Tablespoons (33 mL) water

Add the ingredients in the order listed above to a clean container, mixing with a spoon. If using honey, stir until the honey is completely dissolved. Keep this mixture out of the reach of children. The final concentration of isopropyl alcohol in this mixture is 75%, so keep it away from flames.

Illness Related Directives

1. Do I need a doctor's note if I stay home because I am sick?

The current practice of requiring doctor's notes is temporarily suspended to avoid overwhelming the medical system and you are not required to obtain a doctor's note recommending that you stay home or releasing you back to work, unless specifically asked to do so by your HR Director. Once the virus is under control, the normal practice will resume.

2. What should I do if I am sick with the COVID-19 virus?

The Vermont Department of Health recommends that you stay home and call your doctor. People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 can self-isolate at home during their illness. Call ahead before visiting your doctor. Do not go to the doctor's office unless instructed to do so. Anyone who does not have a health care provider can call 2-1-1 to be connected to a clinic in their area.

- Do not go to or visit any hospitals or long-term care facilities unless absolutely necessary. This is to protect everyone's health, including patients and staff.
- Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home. As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people and animals in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available. Avoid sharing personal household items.

- Wear a facemask if you are sick around other people and pets.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes and clean your hands often.
- Clean all “high-touch” surfaces every day. These include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables

3. What should I do if a co-worker or someone I supervise appears to have a respiratory illness consistent with COVID-19 symptoms?

The CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available). If you see someone with these symptoms, you should report it to your supervisor or to the Director of Human Resources.

Be thoughtful in how you handle the situation – do not make assumptions and avoid words and actions that could be viewed as stigmatizing or discriminating.

4. What should I do if I have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID 19?

You should call your HR Director and follow the guidelines of the CDC and the Vermont Department of Health. Currently, the Vermont Department of Health is advising that people who have been identified by the Department as a close contact to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 should stay home, practice social distancing and monitor their health for 14 days.

Monitoring means checking your temperature daily and staying home.

Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible. The Health Department will be in contact with you regularly during the monitoring period. If you have members in your household who are not a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19, they do not need to self-monitor and do not need to stay home.

If you develop symptoms:

- Call your health care provider right away.
- Before you go to an appointment, let your health care provider know that you are being monitored for novel coronavirus.
- Call Health Department epidemiology and infectious disease staff at 802-863-7240.
- Avoid contact with others.

5. Will the cost of a COVID-19 test be covered by the VSC health plan?

Yes – take a look at CIGNA’s COVID-19 resource page at <https://www.cigna.com/individuals-families/health-wellness/topic-disaster-resource-center/coronavirus-public-resources>

CIGNA states that:

- Through May 31, 2020, we will waive customers' out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 testing-related visits with in-network providers, whether at a doctor's office, urgent care clinic, emergency room, or by virtual care options such as talking with a doctor or clinician 24/7 by phone, tablet, or computer
- Through May 31, 2020, we will make it easier for customers with immunosuppression, chronic conditions or who are experiencing transportation challenges to be treated virtually by in-network physicians with those capabilities.
- We will ensure delivery of your medications – there is no need to order refills earlier than usual, or to stock up
- We are available at any time to answer your calls, provide support, and assist your providers
- If you have general questions about your benefit and coverage, call 1 (855) 287-8400
- If you need help coping with loss, stress, or other issues related to the impact of COVID-19, call 1 (866) 912-1687

6. If I am sick with COVID-19, self-quarantining, self-monitoring, or caring for a family member or co-habitant who is sick with COVID-19, will I need to use accrued paid leave?

Yes. If you are sick or your job does not lend itself to working remotely, you will be required to use accrued sick leave. If you have exhausted your sick leave balance, you may use other accrued leave balances, such as vacation, personal leave, and compensatory time.

7. What resources are available to help me cope with the emotional impact of COVID-19?

The VSCS's Employee Assistance Program is available through CIGNA. It covers all employees and their families, even if you are not covered by the VSC's health insurance. To access EAP benefits, call 1-800-554-6931. Log in to www.myCigna.com and use Employer ID "vsc" for initial registration. It is confidential and provided to employees at no cost.

8. Will the Colleges provide me with a face mask or other protective equipment if I am required to come to work?

The CDC has advised that, if you are not sick, you do not need to wear a face mask unless you work in healthcare, have the virus, or are caring for someone who is sick (and they are not able to wear a facemask). Face masks may be in short supply and should be preserved for those who need them. Doctors agree that the best protection against COVID-19 is to wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.

The Colleges will provide appropriate personal protective equipment to those employees who require it to perform their work, consistent with OSHA requirements. If you have questions, please contact your supervisor or Director of Human Resources.

Travel

1. What should I do if am returning from an international trip?

The CDC and VDH's advice as to the countries from which returning travelers must report to the VDH and stay home, practice social distancing and monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the United States should be reviewed as the list of countries is updated frequently

and now includes many European countries. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>. Call the Vermont Health Department's epidemiology and infectious disease staff at 802-863-7240 if you haven't been in contact with them already.

2. What should I do if my job requires me to travel?

As set forth in the Chancellor's message to the VSC on March 12, 2020, all institutionally sponsored international travel is immediately cancelled and all institutionally sponsored domestic travel is immediately postponed, unless specifically approved by your president or designee.