

COVID-19 FAQs for Faculty and Staff (Revised 12-18-2020)

What is the University doing to protect the campus community?

In collaboration with the Mississippi State Department of Health and the Mississippi institutions of Higher Learning, and assessing expertise from the US Centers for Disease Control, University administration continues to closely monitor the Covid-19 situation.

In addition, the university has convened response teams, including the Campus Covid-19 Taskforce convened in January 2020 and the Campus Safe Start Taskforce convened in May 2020. Out of these efforts, the “A Brave Start” comprehensive guide to campus preparation to start the Fall 2020 semester has been developed and implemented to provide an operational guide that captures the collective input of the campus community. Town hall meetings have been conducted with campus constituents.

Review of the “A Brave Start” guide is ongoing.

Additional measures are detailed in the “A Brave Start” guide located at <https://www.alcorn.edu/discover-alcorn/a-brave-start>.

Are faculty and staff still required to report to work?

Yes. Alcorn State University is open for faculty and staff, who are expected to report and complete essential functions of their respective jobs.

Are there options for telework?

Only as previously approved due to special circumstances. Teleworking or alternative work location (AWL) arrangements ended for faculty and staff based on the phased return schedule issued May 28, 2020. Absences, including those related to COVID-19, require submission of leave documents in accordance with Alcorn State University leave policy.

Employees who are eligible for leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) are eligible to telework when physically able to do so, and as individual jobs are appropriate for telework options.

Those employees who have medical conditions for which accommodation is sought under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should consult the Office of Human Resources Management to initiate the interactive process. Under this process, options for accommodation can be explored.

According to the CDC, individuals with certain conditions may have a higher risk of COVID-19 infections. These conditions may include:

- Older adults (aged 65 years and older)
- People with HIV
- Asthma (moderate to severe)

- Chronic lung disease
- Diabetes
- Serious conditions
- Chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis
- Severe obesity
- Being immunocompromised.

The Reasonable accommodation Questionnaire is located at

https://www.alcorn.edu/uploaded/files/finadmin/hr/REASONABLE_ACCOMMODATION_QUESTIONNAIRE.pdf.

What should I do if I am sick?

Employees should not come to work when they are sick. Employees should stay home and use appropriate accumulated leave. Employees should follow standard leave request and approval procedures.

Employees experiencing symptoms listed in the “A Brave Start” guide should self-report in the Faculty/Staff Portal located on the ASU Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update page.

If I have been ill, when can I return to work?

Out of an abundance of caution, all employees who have reported that they have self-isolated with respiratory illnesses will need to follow CDC guidelines before returning to work.

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 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, shortness of breath); and
- At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*.

For additional guidance, please contact your healthcare provider, or refer to CDC guidance at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

What measures should I take to minimize exposure to and risk of contracting COVID-19?

Everyone should practice preventive steps, as recommended by the CDC to slow the spread of respiratory illnesses, as listed below:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60%

alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water are the best option if hands are visibly dirty.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can. Immediately wash your hands as described above.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.
- High touch surfaces, including counters, tabletops, door knobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, should be cleaned with disinfectant.
- Make sure shared spaces in the home have good air flow, such as by an air conditioner or an open window, weather permitting.
- Household members should use a separate bedroom and bathroom, if possible.
- Prohibit visitors who do not have an essential need to be in the home.

Employees should also continually self-monitor for symptoms potentially related to COVID-19. At this time, symptoms include one or more of the follow:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Runny nose or new sinus congestion
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- New GI symptoms
- New loss of taste or smell

Employees experiencing any of the above symptoms should not report to work. Instead, you should go to the ASU Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates Page and Self-Report in the Faculty/Staff Self-Reporting Portal, located at <https://www.alcorn.edu/discover-alcorn/coronavirus>

What should I do if I come into contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19?

You should report your status on the ASU Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates page in the Faculty/Staff Self-Reporting Portal located at <https://www.alcorn.edu/discover-alcorn/coronavirus>. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines indicate that individuals who have positive exposure to someone with the COVID-19 illness should remain home for 10 to 14 days, with self-monitoring.

Self-monitoring means you should remain alert for potential symptoms of COVID-19, including cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, running nose or new sinus congestion, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, fatigue, new GI symptoms, and new loss of taste or smell. If symptoms are

present, self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice, via telephone, from a healthcare provider or local health department to determine if medical evaluation is needed.

To the extent possible, stay away from other people in your home. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation or ride-sharing.

If you have a previously scheduled medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them you may have been exposed to COVID-19.

Continue practicing preventive steps, as recommended by the CDC to slow the spread of respiratory illnesses, as listed above.

Can an employee who is exhibiting symptoms of illness be directed to go home?

Yes. If an employee appears to be exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19 while at work, the manager or supervisor should excuse the employee from work, advising them to go to the ASU Coronavirus (COVID-19) updates page and report on the Faculty/Staff Self-Reporting Portal located at <https://www.alcorn.edu/discover-alcorn/coronavirus> and to seek care from a healthcare provider.

What should I do if someone in my office or unit is displaying symptoms, but is still present at work?

If someone in your office or unit is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, and/or difficulty breathing), advise them to go home (or stay home) if they feel well enough to do so. It is important to understand that everyone who sneezes or coughs is not infected with coronavirus. It is peak time for seasonal allergies as well. We should all practice good hygiene by covering our nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing with a tissue or inside the elbow washing hands frequently, and wiping down frequently touched surfaces (keyboards, door knobs and handles, phones, etc.).

What should I do if I observe colleagues not wearing a face covering?

Adherence to the University's Face Mask policy is not only a shared community responsibility, it is a matter of adherence to university policy (See related policies at https://www.alcorn.edu/uploaded/files/finadmin/hr/Face_Mask_Policy-08032020.pdf, and https://www.alcorn.edu/uploaded/files/finadmin/hr/Implementation_and_Enforcement_Face_Covering-08032020.pdf . If you see someone who is momentarily not adhering to the guidelines, a discreet, gentle reminder is usually sufficient to correct the matter. However, community members also have the option of reporting violations to the employee's department or to the Office of Human Resources Management.

What is the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)?

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA, which was signed into law on March 18, 2020, provides two distinct leave categories that Alcorn State University has made available to qualifying

employees (employed at least 30 days) to alleviate some of the work, health, family and leave challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic if they are unable to work (or telework). The FFCRA is effective April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Note: Reauthorization of FFCRA or similar legislation is uncertain, pending action by congress. An update regarding status will be provided when available.

The Emergency FMLA Expansion Act/Healthcare provides up to two weeks (10 days) of leave to qualifying employees who:

- Are subject to a federal, state or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19
- Have been advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19
- Is experiencing symptoms of COVID and is seeking diagnosis
- Is caring for an individual who is subject to self-quarantine by a federal, state, or local order or was advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine (paid at 2/3 of salary, with 1/3 subsidized by accumulated leave)
- Is experiencing other conditions substantially similar to COVID-19, as specified by the Secretary of HHS (paid at 2/3 of salary, with 1/3 subsidized by accumulated leave)

The Expanded Family Medical Leave/Childcare provides up to 12 weeks of leave to qualifying employees (employed who are unable to work or telework due to:

- Caring for children, under the age of 18, because their school or place of care has been closed due to COVID-19. The first two weeks is unpaid unless leave time is used, and the following 10 weeks are paid at 2/3 of normal salary up to \$200 daily or \$10,000 total

Leave under the FFCRA is prorated for part-time employees.

Have provisions been made to address the emotional wellness of employees during this time?

Yes. The university is finalizing plans to implement an Employee Assistance program (EAP) provided by Humana. This employee benefit will provide telephonic, face-to-face, online-chat and video-based counseling services to employees and their families.

Counseling will be available specific to COVID-19, as well as;

- Addiction (Alcohol, drug, gambling, and others)
- Anger management
- Career concerns
- Depression and anxiety
- Grief and loss
- Issues concerning family and children
- Managing stress
- Marital or relationship problems
- Workplace conflicts and job performance problems