

COVID-19 Phased Plan for Returning Employees to Work



*Division of Human Resources,
Employee Diversity
and Wellness*

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Winthrop University

COVID-19 Phased Plan for Returning Employees to Work

Winthrop takes the safety of employees and those in the campus community seriously, and to that end, we are implementing an incremental and flexible approach to returning employees to the workplace and resuming campus operations. The phased plan includes short-term and long-term planning on returning employees to work and returning to normal operations.

PHASE I

Effective June 1, 2020, FTE employees who are not able to work from home will be returned to their normal workplace on Winthrop's campus. During Phase I Winthrop will continue to focus on maintaining critical operations and employees who have been working from home will continue to work from home. In addition, some employees may require direct supervision while working on campus. If this is the case, supervisors, who may otherwise be able to work from home, may be required to also return to their campus work place. Depending on the availability of work, temporary employees who are not able to work from home may be returned to work, but supervisors are not required to return temporary employees. Student employment may continue in a work from home capacity unless otherwise approved by the divisional vice president or the provost.

Office Environment

Winthrop has been, and will continue to follow CDC, OSHA, and DHEC guidance regarding thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting campus buildings and workspaces. These specific processes will be ongoing for the foreseeable future. Employees should regularly clean frequently touched surfaces in their immediate work space (door handles, phones, keyboards, desktops, etc.).

Facilities will regularly clean and disinfect common frequently touched surfaces and equipment (restroom door handles, copiers, etc.); however, employees are encouraged to wear gloves or use tissues or paper towels to form a barrier between skin and surfaces when possible.

Employees should avoid gathering in common areas such as conference rooms, break rooms, and hallways.

During Phase I, offices with high traffic from campus constituents or the public must not allow walk-in traffic. Campus constituents and members of the public must be seen by appointment only. Office entry doors must remain locked and visitors should be provided a designated number to call upon arrival.

When possible, items should be left in a secure drop box outside the office door. Areas with high traffic from campus constituents or the public may contact Facilities Management to discuss the installation of a Plexiglas shield in certain work spaces. Writing utensils and other items used by the public should be cleaned regularly.

Expectations of Employees to Follow Public Health Guidance

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the campus community, all Winthrop employees are asked to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and follow CDC protocol for self-care. Prior to returning to work on campus, employees will be required to review expectations of employees to follow public health guidance while on Winthrop's campus, to review the expectations of employees to self-monitor and respond to symptoms or exposure, to review the required training and resources, and to complete the online acknowledgement for returning to work on campus. All of this information will be available on the [COVID-19 Information for Employees](#) section of the HR website under the Faculty and Staff Return to Work Notification, Training, and Resources section.

Until further notice, employees will be asked to [wear protective face coverings](#) at all times, except when the employee is working alone in a private office. Specifically, face coverings must be worn when the employee leaves their private work space and in all face-to-face interactions. Currently Winthrop is supplying face coverings, and other PPE for facilities employees based on CDC guidelines for employees in certain professions. For their own comfort and convenience, employees are encouraged to bring their own face covering when possible.

CDC Protocol for Social Distancing

- Stay at least 6 feet from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings

CDC Protocol for Self-Care

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going into the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Use 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, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Employees

- At the time of publication of this communication, according to DHEC, symptoms of COVID-19 include shortness of breath, coughing, fever of 100.4 °F or greater, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and/or new loss of taste or smell.
- If you are experiencing symptoms or are sick, do not come to work.
- If you become ill while at work, notify your supervisor, **GO HOME IMMEDIATELY, CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER**, and contact LeeAnn Pounds (poundsl@winthrop.edu) in Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness for additional information and instructions.
- If you appear sick, your supervisor may require you to go home. (Supervisors should use discretion in determining when to send an employee home, taking into consideration symptoms associated with general allergies and the common cold.) Please contact the office of Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness for assistance if necessary.
- If you have been in close contact with any person known to have been diagnosed with COVID-19 **DO NOT COME TO WORK**. You must first notify your supervisor and then contact LeeAnn Pounds (poundsl@winthrop.edu) in Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness regarding the need to self-quarantine and for additional instructions. Should symptoms arise during your self-quarantine, you should follow [CDC guidance regarding what to do if you are sick](#). **CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IMMEDIATELY** if your symptoms become severe. You will need clearance from Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness before being allowed to report to work.
- If you have been diagnosed with an active COVID-19 infection **DO NOT COME TO WORK**. Employees who are diagnosed positive should contact the Office of Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness for additional guidance.

- If you were diagnosed and have recovered from the COVID-19 virus, contact LeeAnn Pounds (poundsl@winthrop.edu) in Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness for clearance to return to work.
- Known reckless behavior on the part of any employee may result in a requirement to self-quarantine and/or in disciplinary action.

Guidance for Managing Employee Concerns

Winthrop will continue to follow federal, state, and healthcare guidelines to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus on campus; however, some employees may have special circumstances that cause a greater degree of concern when returning to work on campus. Supervisors should be sensitive to the needs of employees with **high risk circumstances**, with family members with high risk circumstances, or those impacted by child care availability. Continued work from home options should be considered for these employees to the extent possible. When work from home is not possible for employees with high risk circumstances or child care issues, employees may consider the **Emergency Paid Sick Leave**, **Advanced Sick Leave**, and/or **Emergency Family Medical Leave** if applicable to their particular circumstances.

While we do want to provide as much support to our employees as possible, an employee may not refuse to report to work if there are no options available for telecommuting or leave. Even if an employee has accrued paid leave, if they do not meet the eligibility criteria or have exhausted the options available specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, the employee must follow the directive to report to work. Supervisors and employees who have specific concerns should e-mail HRHelp@winthrop.edu.

Vehicle Travel

If employees must be in vehicles or travel in vehicles to perform their job duties, during Phase I, only one employee may be in the vehicle at a time to the extent possible. In situations where the work requires a crew or more than one person in a vehicle at the same time, all occupants must wear face coverings, use hand sanitizer, and allow for the circulation of outside air.

Non-Essential Travel

All non-essential travel continues to be prohibited.

PHASE II

Phase II will be implemented no earlier than June 16, 2020, but the actual date for will be determined under the guidance of the State Department of Administration and the State Human Resources Division. The implementation of Phase II will continue a gradual return to normal operations. During Phase II supervisors should implement a plan to allow a reduced on campus work schedule resulting in approximately 50% of the workforce being in an office at any given time. While during Phase II, campus offices will be required to remain open and operational; supervisors are strongly encouraged to schedule a combination of employees working on campus and working from home in order to reduce the number of employees working in a common work space and allow safe social distancing. Supervisors will work with individual employees to schedule on campus work and work from home. Until further notice, supervisors and employees should use the Temporary or Emergency Telecommuting Guidelines when allowing employees to work from home. Phase II will remain in effect until additional guidance is received from the CDC regarding the mitigation of the risks of infection associated with the COVID-19 virus in the local community and the state.

Office Environment

During Phase II supervisors must continue to employ the guidance issued for Phase I that allows for safe social distancing and cleaning of high-touch surfaces in the workplace. With more employees on campus in Phase II, supervisors may additionally consider reassigning a work location, scheduling meetings using conference calls or one of the online meeting platforms and modifying work practices to reduce the likelihood of personal interaction with others (e.g., install secure drop boxes for the delivery of documents or develop online forms and processes).

Expectations of Employees to Follow Public Health Guidance

Prior to returning to work on campus, employees will be required to review expectations of employees to follow public health guidance while on Winthrop's campus, to review the expectations of employees to self-monitor and respond to symptoms or exposure, to review the required training and resources, and to complete the online acknowledgement for returning to work on campus. All of this information will be available on the COVID-19 Information for Employees section of the HR website under the Faculty and Staff Return to Work Notification, Training, and Resources section.

During Phase II, employees must continue to adhere to the guidelines for social distancing, self-care protocol, and wearing face masks as required in Phase I. Also during Phase II, supervisors and employees continue to be required to notify Human Resources when an employee is suspected to have been exposed to COVID-19, is experiencing symptoms, or has tested positive for the virus. See Phase I guidance for additional information.

Guidance for managing employee concerns Winthrop will continue to follow federal, state, and healthcare guidelines to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus on campus; however, some employees may have special circumstances that cause a greater degree of concern when returning to work on campus. Supervisors should be sensitive to the needs of employees with high risk circumstances, with family members with high risk circumstances, or those impacted by child care availability. Continued work from home options should be considered for these employees to the extent possible. When work from home is not possible for employees with high risk circumstances or child care issues, employees may consider the Emergency Paid Sick Leave, Advanced Sick Leave, and/or Emergency Family Medical Leave if applicable to their particular circumstances.

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If employees must be in vehicles or travel in vehicles to perform their job duties, during Phase I, only one employee may be in the vehicle at a time to the extent possible. In situations where the work requires a crew or more than one person in a vehicle at the same time, all occupants must wear face coverings, use hand sanitizer, and allow for the circulation of outside air.

Non-Essential Travel

All non-essential travel continues to be prohibited.

PHASE III

Winthrop will continue to follow federal, state, and local guidance in determining when the risks of infection associated with the COVID-19 pandemic event have been mitigated and the protocol and other measures required in Phase I and Phase II (see above) may be discontinued or altered. Phase III will require all employees to return to their campus workspaces with updated requirements regarding workplace safety. In addition, we will continue to follow healthcare and environmental guidelines for providing a safe work environment, including guidance for environmental health and safety and social distancing. As guidance is received, Winthrop will communicate guidelines and expectations to the campus community about when Phase III will be implemented.

Winthrop will determine when the Temporary or Emergency Telecommuting Guidelines will be discontinued. At that time, the Winthrop University Telecommuting Policy [policy currently being developed] must be followed in allowing employees to work remotely.

For more information, questions or concerns regarding returning to work, contact HRHelp@winthrop.edu