COVID-19: Leaves of Absence
Quick Reference Guide for HR Departmental Contacts

Q. WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE IS SICK?
A. An employee sick with a fever and/or respiratory symptoms should not report to work. Time off due to sickness should generally be treated as a standard sick absence, unless the employee’s sickness is related to COVID-19 (see specific leave provisions below which cover COVID-related absences). Medical documentation may be required. You should work with Leave Management. Specific questions about how to code your absence should be directed to your HR Business Partner/Leave Management.

Keep in mind, employees should contact their healthcare provider if they experience fever, cough and have difficulty breathing, or have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or if they live in or have recently traveled to an area with ongoing spread. They can talk to their healthcare provider about recent travel or contact. Their healthcare professional will work with public health officials to determine if they need to be tested for COVID-19.

Applicable Laws/Policies include:

1. Sick Leave (including Officer Salary Continuation and Sick Time for Staff)
   - Employees use salary continuation/sick leave if unable to work due to illness
   - Information for HR Departmental Contacts: humanresources.columbia.edu/toolkit
   - Information for Employees: humanresources.columbia.edu/workplace-essentials
   - Note: New York State Disability still applies. Employees will continue to file claims for NYS Disability, if eligible.

2. New York State Disability
   - By Phone: 888-842-4462, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday; or
   - Online: www.cigna.com/customer-forms (no username/password)
   - Note: 1199 Clerical and Cafeteria employees should call the Benefit Fund’s Member Service to file a claim, not Cigna.

3. Family and Medical Leave of Absence (FMLA)
   policylibrary.columbia.edu/family-and-medical-leave-act-fmla
   - A medical leave of absence still runs concurrent with FMLA, if eligible.
   - Note: Based on our size, there are no new FMLA guidelines associated with COVID-19 that are applicable to Columbia University.

4. NYS Paid Sick Leave for Mandatory or Precautionary Quarantine paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/covid19 (to access Guidance For Obtaining An Order For Mandatory Or Precautionary Quarantine)
   - A 14-calendar day period of paid sick leave is available, and is in addition to other available sick leave for all employees that have tested positive for COVID-19, or presumed positive as indicated by a note from their physician. Documentation is required.
5. NYC Safe and Sick Leave
   policylibrary.columbia.edu/new-york-city-earned-safe-and-sick-time-act
   • Columbia University complies with the New York City Earned Safe and Sick Time Act by providing eligible faculty and staff the ability to accrue up to a maximum of 40 hours per fiscal year in paid safe/sick time.
   • Employees may use New York City Safe and Sick Leave for employee’s own illness
   • Note: Other States and NYS counties have relevant laws, and information is available on our website policylibrary.columbia.edu/leave-absence-all-states-leave-laws

Q. WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE MUST REMAIN HOME TO CARE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS THAT ARE ILL?  
A. Employees are advised to contact their manager and/or their HR Department Contact to discuss available leave options including:

1. New York State Paid Family Leave (PFL)  
   • Provides eligible employees with job-protected, partial paid leave up to 10 weeks in 2020 (no change from 2019).
   • PFL is available to employees working in New York State who have satisfied the eligibility requirements of either: a) working for at least 26 consecutive weeks if regularly working 20 hours or more per week or b) worked for at least 175 days if working less than 20 hours per week.
   • COVID-19 Special Guidance for PFL: If you are an eligible employee whose dependent child is under a mandatory or precautionary order of quarantine or isolation, you may be able to take Paid Family Leave.
   • COVID-19 Leave for a sick family member: A 14-calendar day period of paid sick leave is available, and is in addition to other available leave taken to care for a sick family member. Documentation is required. Leave may not extend beyond a 14 calendar day period, but within the 14 day period may be taken continuously or intermittently. Employees may use documentation from their healthcare provider, or an order of quarantine from their local health department. Employees may contact their local health department for instructions on obtaining an order.
   • Any leave request beyond a 14 calendar day period requires coordination with Cigna to file a NYS Paid Family Leave (PFL) claim and completion of FMLA paperwork. PFL, FMLA and NYC Safe and Sick Leave will run concurrently.
   • Note: If an employee works outside of New York State, other states have relevant laws. Information is available on our website policylibrary.columbia.edu/leave-absence-all-states-leave-laws.

2. FMLA  
   policylibrary.columbia.edu/family-and-medical-leave-act-fmla
   • This leave of absence is available to help care for an eligible family member with a serious health condition.
   • FMLA provides eligible employees with a job-protected, unpaid leave of up to 12 weeks.
   • Normal FMLA rules apply and there is no special COVID-19 guidance for an employer our size. Documentation is required.

3. NYC Safe and Sick Leave  
   policylibrary.columbia.edu/new-york-city-earned-safe-and-sick-time-act
4. Emergency Days from Columbia University

- Columbia recognizes that some employees who have assigned tasks or alternative assignments may, from time to time, find themselves unable to perform this work because of school closures, lack of available child care, or similar external challenges related to COVID-19.
- We are offering our full-time and regular part-time employees up to 10 paid work days of emergency absence time in these situations, in addition to any other available leave benefits under our existing University policies (including up to 40 hours under the New York City Earned Safe and Sick Time Act).
- Employees should submit requests for an emergency absence to their managers. We will consider requests for an emergency absence in half-day or full-day increments.
- Approved emergency absences will be paid based on the employee’s regular scheduled hours and regular rate of pay.

5. Vacation/Personal Leave

- May be requested, and is subject to review.
- A personal leave is an unpaid leave generally used in situations not covered by other types of University or federal/state/local laws or additional time provided beyond federal/state/local laws.

Q. WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE MUST REMAIN HOME TO CARE FOR A CHILD BECAUSE SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED OR BECAUSE EMPLOYEE DOES NOT HAVE ALTERNATIVE CHILDCARE OPTIONS?

A. Employees are advised to contact their manager and/or their HR Department Contact to discuss available leave options including:

1. New York State Paid Family Leave (PFL)
   Please note that this may only be available if it is for the purpose of taking care of a child with an illness. Medical certification is required.
   - Provides eligible employees with job-protected, partial paid leave up to 10 weeks in 2020 (no change from 2019).
   - PFL is available to employees working in New York State who have satisfied the eligibility requirements of either: a) working for at least 26 consecutive weeks if regularly working 20 hours or more per week or b) worked for at least 175 days if working less than 20 hours per week.
   - Note: If an employee works outside of New York State, many other states have similar laws. Information is available on our website: [policylibrary.columbia.edu/leave-absence-all-states-leave-laws](policylibrary.columbia.edu/leave-absence-all-states-leave-laws)

2. NYC Safe and Sick Leave
Columbia University complies with the New York City Earned Safe and Sick Time Act by providing eligible faculty and staff the ability to accrue up to a maximum of 40 hours per fiscal year in paid safe/sick time.

Employees may use NYC Safe and Sick leave if an employee needs to care for a child whose school or childcare provider has been closed by order of a public official due to a public health emergency.

**Note:** Many other states and NYS counties have similar laws and information is available on our website policylibrary.columbia.edu/leave-absence-all-states-leave-laws

3. Emergency Days from Columbia University

- Columbia recognizes that some employees who have assigned tasks or alternative assignments may, from time to time, find themselves unable to perform this work because of school closures, lack of available child care, or similar external challenges related to COVID-19.
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**Q. WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE IS IN A HIGH-RISK GROUP FOR COVID-19. WHAT SHOULD THEY DO?**

A. If they believe that they are in a high-risk group, they should reach out to their supervisor. Documentation, from an authorized treatment provider, of the underlying medical condition that prompted the request will be required to be processed and reviewed with Leave Management. These cases will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis based on the specific facts and circumstances.

Additional Online Resources:
- Information for HR Departmental Contacts: humanresources.columbia.edu/toolkit
- Information for Employees: humanresources.columbia.edu/workplace-essentials

**Q. HOW DO I PROCESS A PAF FOR LEAVES OF ABSENCE, INCLUDING A LEAVE RELATED TO COVID-19?**

A. To process a leave please follow the PAF Processing Guidelines. Please note that there are 2 new codes for the paid leave available for employees that utilize the quarantine leave for their own COVID-19 illness or to take care of a sick family member with COVID-19. Documentation is required.