

Northern Illinois University

Guidelines and Protocols for Returning to Work on Campus

July 15, 2020



Northern Illinois University

The following is based on the best information available regarding public health as of July 15, 2020 and will be amended as more public health information becomes available.

The Northern Illinois University community is committed to the safety and well-being of each other. As such, President Lisa Freeman convened a working group comprised of representatives from various divisions and offices to develop protocols and guidelines regarding the eventual return to working on campus or other off-site workspaces. An additional working group, comprised partially of internal and external public health experts, helped inform several of the protocols and guidelines. The membership of both groups is listed at the end of this document.

To stay current or to ask questions or clarifications regarding the protocols and guidelines, visit the NIU [Keep Working](#) website.

To protect our community, all employees are expected to comply with the protocols and guidelines articulated in this document. Failure to do so jeopardizes the safety and well-being of our students and colleagues, and can result in corrective action. Huskies appreciate and respect all members of our community, and are encouraged to continue to demonstrate civility and support of each other during this stressful and uncertain time.

The working group followed these assumptions:

- The state of Illinois will remain in Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois plan.
- Restrictions remain in place regarding size of groups (no more than 50).
- Restaurants will continue with delivery or takeout only.
- Masks will be required to be worn in places where physical distancing cannot occur.
- The Holmes Student Center will still be used as a quarantine site through the end of July.
- K-12 will return to in-person instruction in August 2020.

The working group abided by the following guiding principles:

- The university will follow all applicable local, state and federal public health guidelines and orders.
- The health and safety of our students and employees come first.
- Supervisors will remain flexible to accommodate employees who must balance work and caregiver responsibilities.
- University operations will continue in a manner consistent with expert public health guidance and principles.

The following protocols and guidelines will be put into place for the safety of our employees.

Returning to working on campus or the employees' off-site workspace

Supervisors are expected to follow these guidelines for the remaining of the summer and for the fall semester:

Work-from-home has been extended to Aug. 16, 2020

The guidance that came out in late May encouraging those employees who can work remotely to do so through July 31 is extended through Aug. 16.

Returning to campus Aug. 17 through the end of the calendar year

- Beginning Aug. 17, 2020, most offices and facilities that are student-facing (e.g., academic departments, student support services, cultural resource centers) or that serve employees or the community (e.g., human resources, admissions) will be open during normal business hours for in-person visits.

- To maintain low density, supervisors must work with their teams to develop staffing plans, where appropriate, for the entire fall semester.
 - Supervisors are encouraged to continue the use of rotational or staggered schedules to reduce density and foot traffic.
 - To accommodate employees with desktop computers, supervisors might want to consider rotational schedules in weeks instead of days. For example, in an office with two employees, one might work in the office for the first half of the semester while the other works from home. The two employees would then switch mid-semester.
 - Employees should think about what will work best considering their personal or family circumstances, and contact their supervisors to discuss and reach agreements on work schedules that support the needs of the departments and the circumstances of the employees.

Working remotely Aug. 17 through the end of the calendar year

- Offices that can continue to provide their services to students, employees and the community remotely are encouraged to do so as long as those decisions are widely communicated to staff and the community.
- Employees working remotely will not be required to complete Work-At-Home Agreements through the end of the calendar year.
- This guidance might change depending on federal, state and local orders, as well as the decisions made by local school districts regarding fall schedules.

Additionally:

- Before returning to campus for work, all employees must take a brief [training](#). Those employees who do not have access to the internet at home should take the training on campus when they return to work. The training is necessary because we value each other and want to make sure that all employees understand the safety expectations and protocols.
 - Those employees whose jobs already require them to work on campus must still take the training.
- The Employee Assistant Program has developed Returning to Working on Campus Toolkits for employees and supervisors available at the NIU [Keep Working](#) website.
- Each day before coming to campus for work, employees should ask themselves whether they have any of the following symptoms:
 - Fever higher than 100F°.
 - New cough.
 - Shortness of breath.
 - Sore throat.
 - Diarrhea/nausea.
 - New lack of smell.
 - If employees have any symptoms, then they should **notify their supervisor and not come to campus or to their off-site workspace.**
 - Employees who feel well enough to work from home can do so. Otherwise, employees should utilize available sick leave benefits.
 - Employees who are sick should not come to campus to work until:
 - They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (without fever-reducing medication).
 - Other symptoms have improved (for example, shortness of breath is better).
 - At least 10 days have passed since the symptoms first appeared.
- Employees and students should download the #CampusClear app from either the Android or Apple app stores.
 - The app will ask users each day whether they have any of the symptoms mentioned above.
 - If any of these symptoms exist, the user will receive instructions regarding next steps.
 - The #CampusClear app is one aspect of a multi-tier strategy that will help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our university community. More information on the app will be available in early August.
- Employees who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 must notify Human Resource Services immediately. HRS will maintain confidentiality and work with the DeKalb County Health Department to determine exposure to other members of the NIU community. In this situation, employees will be required to provide doctor's notes that provide clearance to return to campus at the appropriate time.
- Employees who have had any close contact with people with lab-confirmed or presumptive COVID-19 diagnoses should call the COVID-19 helpline (815-753-0444) and their local health care provider. Callers will be asked a series of screening questions. Those results will be shared with the DeKalb County Health Department (DCHD). **Employees should not come to campus or to their off-site workspaces until receiving guidance from a health provider or the DCHD.**

PPE requirements and distribution

- With the exception of private offices or personal workspaces where physical distancing can be maintained, employees, students, vendors and visitors to campus must wear face masks when indoors. If an employee is not alone (e.g., in their office, a conference room), face masks must be worn even if physical distancing is possible.
- Employees, students, vendors and visitors to campus will not be required to wear face masks outdoors unless physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Employees who cannot wear face masks because of underlying medical conditions should notify their supervisors immediately and continue working from home until they are given further instructions. See more details at the [FAQ](#) page on the NIU [Keep Working](#) website.
 - Employees who cannot wear face masks because of underlying medical conditions must contact, or be referred to, the [Office of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Education \(AAEOE\)](#) for assistance. AAEOE will engage in an interactive process with those employees and their departments/units to determine any reasonable accommodations that might be necessary to assist the employees in performing their jobs.
 - Employees and supervisors are expected to practice patience, be reasonable and work together to resolve issues or concerns with the use of face masks.
 - Supervisors are expected to work with their employees on attempting to find a suitable solution to their employees' issues or concerns with the use of face masks. If an employee is represented by a union, supervisors must consult with Labor Relations in Human Resource Services before implementing any resolutions to employee concerns/issues. In the event that a resolution with an employee cannot be reached, supervisors/managers must consult with other appropriate offices, such as Human Resource Services and/or the Office of General Counsel, before making any final decisions.
- For those who need or want them, the university will provide each employee with two reusable, washable face masks.
 - Each unit or area should have a designated person request the number of face masks needed. Requests can be made at the [Facilities Management and Campus Services/Central Stores website](#).
- Any vendors, visitors or others conducting business on university property will be required to follow the university's face mask policy.
- The university will provide face masks, hand sanitizer and some disinfecting products (e.g., spray bottle with disinfectant and paper towels) for self-cleaning work areas.
 - Requests for PPE and disinfecting products should follow standard processes for requesting supplies for offices. For example, each employee in the Office of the General Counsel should not request disinfecting products, but the office as a whole can do so.
 - These common PPE and disinfecting products will be provided at no cost for General Revenue units/operations. Auxiliary operations should continue to purchase products to allow for appropriate accounting between the separate financial systems.
 - For a list of products that the university carries (e.g., gloves) as well as instructions for how to obtain them, visit [Facilities Management and Campus Services/Central Stores website](#). Typically, the person normally responsible for ordering supplies for an office area or operation is familiar with the process of ordering items through Central Stores.
 - For those units that might need products beyond what the university carries, units should procure items as they normally would.

Cleaning and sanitation

- **General cleaning:** All buildings will be cleaned daily using CDC guidelines regarding appropriate cleaning supplies. Daily cleaning will primarily focus on common spaces and will include wiping down high-touch areas, including door knobs, sinks, water fountains and elevator buttons.
 - Employees should be sure to wipe down their workspaces on a regular basis. To request disinfecting products for office areas, visit the [Facilities Management and Campus Services/Central Stores website](#).
 - Office trash collection can also be centralized where feasible to minimize the need to enter office areas and provide more time for common area sanitizing efforts. More details will be coordinated with office areas as plans are developed.
- **Classrooms:** Classrooms will be cleaned daily and will be augmented with disinfection efforts between classes, as feasible. While the objective is to disinfect between each class, there could be periods of peak classroom demand which might not make this possible. As an alternative and additional option, disinfectant wipes will be available in classrooms to allow individuals the opportunity to sanitize personal work surfaces.
- **Restrooms:** All restrooms will be cleaned daily. Where possible, restroom doors should remain open and employees should wash their hands thoroughly. Restrooms without air dryers will have a trash can placed by the entrance/exit door. When it's not possible to leave a door open, employees should open the door with a paper towel, and place the paper towel in the trash can upon exiting. **Brushing teeth and shaving is prohibited.**
- **Interior doors:** Interior doors should remain open during business hours to the greatest extent possible. If door stops

are needed, contact your Building Representative or submit a request to the [Facilities Management and Campus Services Work Request](#) webpage. **Please do not keep stairwell doors open as this violates the fire code.**

- **Hand sanitizer stations:** Hand sanitizer stations have been placed near the entrances to all buildings. Offices can order bottled hand sanitizer as noted above.
- **Disinfectant spray:** Disinfectant spray will be provided in all computer labs and other high-touch/high-traffic offices and spaces. Offices overseeing these areas can order disinfectant spray as noted above.

Workspace areas, including conference rooms, offices, reception areas, lounges and kitchens

- With the exception of private offices or workspaces where physical distancing is possible, face masks must be worn at all times in these areas.
 - Although employees will not be required to wear face masks in their private offices or workspaces where physical distancing is possible, they should be sure to clean any surfaces (e.g., tables) before employees visit the offices or workspaces.
 - If an employee is not alone (e.g., in their office, a conference room), face masks must be worn even if physical distancing is possible.
- All meeting and conference rooms must be configured to comply with physical distancing.
 - Meeting and conference rooms should be used sparingly. Employees are encouraged to continue using Microsoft Teams when holding meetings.
- All reception areas or offices where lines might form must put tape on the floor at a distance that complies with physical distancing, and physical distancing signage must be posted. Signage may be downloaded from the NIU [Keep Working](#) website.
- High-touch items, such as pens or magazines, must be removed from waiting areas.
- Food consumption should take place in a person's individual workspace or outdoors in a manner compliant with physical distancing.
 - Employees should always wash their hands before and after eating.
- Disposable utensils must be used in kitchens. Reusable items (e.g., flatware, dishes, cups) should not be used.
- The use of communal microwaves, coffee pots and toasters is discouraged.
- Food and drink in refrigerators should be clearly marked with the person's name and removed at the end of each day.
 - Employees should not share food, including condiments and creamer.

Elevators and stairwells

- No more than four people should enter an elevator at any one time.
 - Residence halls will have different guidelines.
- Each person should stand in one of the four corners of the elevator without leaning against the walls.
- Employees should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer as soon as possible after exiting the elevator.
- Face masks must be worn in the elevator.
- Please use the stairs if possible and avoid touching handrails.
 - If handrails must be used, employees should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer as soon as possible after exiting the stairwell.
- Where possible, signage should be placed on each floor next to stairwells designating it as "up" or "down."
 - Building representatives will take the lead on designating the directional flow of stairwells.

Meetings and other employee interactions

- Employees are **strongly encouraged** to continue using Microsoft Teams for meetings even when employees are working on campus.
- If meetings are held in person, physical distancing must be followed and no more than fifty 50 people may be present in the meeting.
 - Face masks must be worn.
- Employees are encouraged to limit the use of public spaces such as lounges or breakrooms.
- Employees should not invite unnecessary visitors to campus.

Events

- All university events must follow [Restore Illinois Phase 4](#) guidelines.
- Meetings are limited to no more than 50 people, physical distancing must be followed and face masks must be worn.
- Groups are strongly encouraged to hold their events virtually if possible.

Buildings

- Most buildings will be unlocked during business hours.
- The Holmes Student Center will open Aug. 3, although eating venues will not open until Aug. 17.
- The Recreation Center will open during early August.
- Information on the hours and services provided by University Libraries can be found at the [Library Guide](#) website.

Transportation

- All public transit vehicles are thoroughly cleaned at least twice per day. This includes disinfecting commonly touched surfaces throughout the entire vehicle for the safety of the passengers and the bus operator.
- All passengers capable of doing so must enter and exit through the rear door of the bus. Individuals using mobility devices, boarding with strollers, or who have small children, can request the use of the front door.
- All passengers riding the DeKalb Public Transit System are required to wear face coverings. A face covering is considered as a commercial or homemade mask, bandana or scarf that covers from above the nose down to the lower part of the face at or below the chin.
- At this time, all fixed routes are limited to a maximum of 10 to 12 people on board a bus at any time. This helps ensure physical distancing occurs between passengers. This number might increase with guidance from the Center for Disease Control and the state of Illinois.
- All routes, with the exception of the Route 12 to the Elburn Metra Station, are fare-free at this time. Fare collection is anticipated to return in the near future. All NIU students, faculty and staff can ride any fixed route for free with a valid NIU OneCard. The Route 12 to Elburn requires all passengers to purchase tickets from www.universitytickets.com.
- All passengers should do their part by maintaining a safe distance when traveling on the bus, washing their hands, covering their mouths when they cough and staying home when sick.

Additional Resources

- [ADA Employee Accommodation](#)
- [Benefits](#)
- [Freedom of Expression Policy](#)
- [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [What to do if you are sick?](#)

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