

According to Governor McMasters' March 5, 2021 Executive Order, all state employees, including Winthrop employees are **required to return to their on-campus work locations on March 15, 2021**. Employees who have not already done so must go to the HR [COVID-19 Information for Employees website](#) and click on the "Faculty and Staff Return to Work Notification, Training, and Resources" to view training and expectations for working on campus, and to complete the Online Acknowledgement that they viewed the information.

Frequently asked questions are provided to assist employees in understanding more about the directive from the Governor.

Does the expectation to return all employees to the workplace include those who work in close environments such as cubicles or shared offices?

Yes. Winthrop will still employ measures to reduce the likelihood of transmission in the workplace including, but not limited to, requiring employees to wear masks in all buildings, classrooms, and common areas. Employees are reminded to wash hands frequently, continue virtual co-worker meetings when possible and not to congregate in common areas. Employees should stay home when they are not feeling well.

Does this expectation include those employees with medical conditions?

Yes. However, employees with disabilities should continue to work with Human Resources to request workplace accommodations when necessary for their own health conditions. If an employee has a disability (e.g., congestive heart failure) that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies as placing the individual at higher risk for severe illness resulting from the COVID-19 virus, Winthrop will work through the interactive process with the employee to evaluate a request for a **temporary** reasonable accommodation to work remotely until the individual has had an **opportunity** to be vaccinated. The CDC provides a list of conditions that place an individual at a higher risk of severe illness from the COVID-19 virus. [View the CDC's list.](#)

Requests for accommodation based on other types of disabilities, such as anxiety will be handled on a case-by-case basis and in a manner consistent with the ADA, FMLA and other laws relevant to individuals with a disability and/or in need of medical leave. In most all situations employees being physically present in their on-campus work location is considered an essential job function. Therefore, Winthrop will engage in an interactive dialogue with the employee to identify accommodations that would enable the employee to report to the workplace. Examples include access to additional personal protective equipment, a staggered reporting time, and reasonable work area modifications such as sneeze guards or the movement of a desk within the cubicle.

What if I opt NOT to receive the COVID vaccine?

As stated in previous communications, Winthrop will not require employees to receive the COVID vaccine. However, an employee's choice not to receive the vaccine will not be a consideration for allowing continued work from home. As of March 15, 2021, physically reporting to the on-campus work location is an essential function of an employee's job.

Is an employee expected to report to the workplace if a family member or household resident is at higher risk for severe illness from the COVID-19 virus?

Yes. The Americans with Disabilities Act does not apply when the individual with a disability is a family member or household resident of the employee. Qualifying employees may be eligible for leave pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) if they need to care for a family member with a

serious health condition. Requests for FMLA leave will need to be made by the employee and will be processed in accordance with federal law and Winthrop's policy.

Are employees still expected to stay home if they are feeling ill?

Yes. Employees who are experiencing any symptoms that can be associated with COVID-19 (runny nose, cough, fever, headache, etc.) should not come to work until the symptoms have subsided. Employees who are exhibiting any of the COVID-related symptoms are encouraged to obtain a COVID-19 test.

If an employee has had close contact with a COVID-19 case and/or is symptomatic, will Winthrop still require the employee to quarantine?

Yes. All guidelines regarding isolation and quarantine are still applicable. If an employee is required to quarantine based on DHEC's guidance, an agency has discretion to allow the employee to work from home during the period of quarantine if the employee can perform his or her job functions remotely. If an employee does work from home while quarantining, the employee must return back to the workplace immediately upon completion of the quarantine period.

If the child care center or school for the child of an employee is not open to in-person learning fulltime, is the employee expected to report to the workplace?

Yes. However, we recognize there are some issues regarding child care associated with K-12 school schedules. Winthrop has requested approval of a plan that would include allowing a few additional weeks to allow employees with children in K-12 schools to secure child care.

Requests for additional work from home beyond March 15, 2021 for child care concerns that are not associated with K-12 school schedules will not be approved. As Winthrop is required to return to normal operations and return all employees to their on-campus work locations as soon as possible, employees are responsible for securing child care in order to comply with the Governor's orders.

Employees may work with their supervisors to request annual leave if additional time is needed, and supervisors are asked to remain flexible to the extent possible in approving leave requests for a limited time due to child care concerns.

May I bring my child to work with me on a temporary basis until I secure child care?

No. Due to safety and liability concerns, children are not allowed to accompany adults in the workplace.

May I request continued work from home on a part-time or full-time basis?

Effective March 15, 2021, Winthrop will resume the regular Winthrop work schedule (8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday) and any work from home approval going forward must follow the Winthrop University Telecommuting/Remote policy and guidelines. At this point, work from home at Winthrop University will be approved rarely and only when extenuating circumstances are present. Requests for ADA/FMLA accommodations regarding health conditions will be considered when necessary. Occasional or casual work from home will not be approved, unless one of the situations described in the above FAQs apply to the individual employee. Winthrop leadership may consider long-term work from home for some specific position types in the future, but the state Department of Administration has made it clear that all employees should return to the workplace per the Governor's order before considering work from home requests.

What can supervisors do to mitigate occupational risk of exposure to COVID-19 for employees?

Supervisors should continue to identify ways to modify the workplace to the extent possible to promote the safety of employees. Examples of modifications include:

- Offering staggered start times to mitigate the congregation of employees at points of ingress/egress. (See the [Flexible Work Schedule guidelines](#) and [Flexible Work Schedule Request form](#).)
- Spreading out workstations to increase the distance between work areas.
- Utilizing common space (e.g., conference rooms) as temporary worksites for some employees to promote social distancing.
- Use one of the virtual meeting platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.) for staff meetings or other meetings with co-workers.
- Installing sneeze guards or Plexiglas barriers. (Most offices have already installed sneeze guards and barriers where appropriate. Supervisors may make additional requests through the Facilities Management Work Order System.
- Ensure that all offices are stocked with hand sanitizer, disinfectant, and disinfectant wipes. Supervisors may request additional supplies through the Facilities Management Work Order System.
- Place signage in break rooms and other common spaces directing employees to avoid gathering in these spaces and to disinfect after using common appliances and equipment.
- Direct employees to disinfect commonly used office equipment after each use (copiers, printers, phones, etc.) Special copier and printer cleaning supplies and instructions are available through Printing Services. Employees should be cautioned about the special care of this equipment and not spraying disinfectant directly onto the equipment.

Am I required to notify my supervisor if I received the vaccine or plan to receive the vaccine?

No. Employees are not obligated to inform their supervisor of their plans to receive or not receive the vaccine as this is protected health information. Supervisors should not ask, or in any way imply, that employees within their departments disclose their individual vaccination status or plans.