



The Research  
Foundation for

The State University of New York

## RF-Employees: University at Albany UPDATE: COVID-19 GUIDANCE

To All Supervisors:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide all supervisors with internal guidance and direction as to how to manage the return of RF employees to the workplace in conjunction with our [Continuity of Research and Scholarly Activities Guide](#) and [UAlbany Guide to Returning to the Workplace](#). This is for use by supervisors as a quick reference guide and is not for dissemination amongst the general workforce. A separate communication will go out to all RF employees following this.

**Determining Which Employees Return:** First, there is no expectation that research offices and labs that have been functioning effectively remotely, to be open for in-person service at this time. As a supervisor, it is your prerogative and responsibility to determine which employees must return to work. To the extent their work cannot be completed from home, the employee must be returned to work for the amount of time per week necessary to complete that work. For a small number of employees, this means returning full time; for most, it means a few hours to a few days per week. It is important to assess, informally, the job function of the employee versus the honest operational needs of the unit. Employees should not return to the workplace if there is not on campus work to do (i.e. greeting visitors). If an employee has excess capacity that isn't able to be filled through reassignment of duties on your sponsored project, please contact RF Human Resources to discuss options.

**Supervision:** Employees who return to the workplace must be supervised and supported, as appropriate. This may be accomplished either in person or remotely, depending upon the job function. You must consider which supervisors you may need to return to work to achieve this supervisory need, as supervision is a necessary function of the employee who oversees the work of others.

**When:** You may commence the return of employees **beginning the week of June 15th**. This timeframe allows supervisors to use their discretion in returning employees to work on a schedule that permits for physical distancing, acquisition of appropriate PPE and determining how to meet operational needs within the established safety parameters. Staggering or alternating on campus schedules are recommended and encouraged when

possible. You must communicate with your employee(s) when they are expected to report to work.

**Population Density:** The reopening plan for the State requires that the University occupancy not exceed 50% at this time. As a general rule, this means that each office may only have roughly half its staff in at any given time. This reduction in population density can be achieved by staggering work days for employees (ex. 3 in office, two out of office, with employees rotating daily, weekly or on a schedule you deem fit for your operations).

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Employees are permitted to wear their own face masks/coverings so long as it covers both their nose and mouth. Unit and departmental supervisors are responsible for coordinating the ordering of PPE (face masks), as needed, from the [Office of Environmental Health & Safety](#) ("EH&S") on behalf of their employees who are reporting to work. All employees MUST have a mask/face covering to be on campus. It is critical that you place this order as soon as practicable once you have determined who will be returning. Requests can be made on their website <https://www.albany.edu/ehs/>. **Face masks are required when employees cannot physically distance. This is not optional and employees must comply with this requirement.**

**Face covering Compliance:** Masks/face coverings is necessary and required. Compliance with this requirement is not optional and, in most instances, is required by executive order. The University takes these obligations very seriously and requires that our supervisors do the same.

If an employee forgot, lost or broke their mask (whether reasonable wear and tear or otherwise), please contact EH&S to coordinate a replacement for the employee immediately. If an employee exhibits a clear pattern of forgetfulness or irresponsibility with respect to face coverings, please contact RF Human Resources via phone at 518-437-4500 or [RFHR@albany.edu](mailto:RFHR@albany.edu).

If an employee refuses or fails to wear a mask when required, the supervisor must verbally counsel the employee and formally instruct the employee to wear a face mask\*\*. Be clear that this is a directive. If the employee refuses or persists in their non-compliance, formally counsel the employee with a written counseling memorandum. If you encounter further non-compliance, intentional or negligent, contact RF Human Resources via phone at 518-437-4500 or [RFHR@albany.edu](mailto:RFHR@albany.edu). Personal preference does not govern – all employees must abide by the executive order as well as any reasonable supervisory directive that a face mask be worn in any given situation.

Be mindful of the fact that wearing a face mask for extended periods of time can be uncomfortable by permitting employees to take breaks in open areas away from others where they can physically distance such that they can remove the mask for relief.

\*\*Employees who indicate that they are *unable* to wear a mask or cloth face covering will be provided a face shield by EH&S. Do not inquire further as to why they are unable to wear a mask. If the face shield presents a problem as well, have the employee contact RF Human Resources at 437-4500 or [RFHR@albany.edu](mailto:RFHR@albany.edu).

**Difficulty Maintaining Physical Distancing:** If you have questions about physical distancing given your workspace, are experiencing difficulty configuring your space to maintain physical distancing, or receive a complaint from an employee about the lack of physical distancing due to the configuration of your unit's workspace, please contact the Customer Service Center for the Office of Facilities Management at 518-442-3480.

**Office Barriers /Plexiglas:** Installation of new barriers will be limited to high interaction spaces that cannot otherwise ensure distancing through other means (distance markings, appointments, etc.). If, after this consideration, you believe your unit or department requires a plexiglass or other type of physical barrier, please submit a work order to the Facilities Customer Service Center (518-442-3480) through your primary departmental contact and the request will be reviewed.

**Cleaning Supplies or Disinfectant:** If your unit or department requires specific supplies for disinfecting common workspaces or work areas, which may include cleaning counters, common keyboards, phone keypads, etc., please contact EH&S at the number provided above. Please be mindful of the fact that these items may be in short supply and should be used appropriately and in appropriate intervals between employee use to assist the University in meeting the needs of all units and departments.

**Watch the safety video:** Before returning to work all employees must view a 12 minute training video entitled "New York State COVID- 19 Response: Return to Work Training". This applies to employees newly returning to work and to employees who have already returned as an essential employee. RF employees will view the video at <https://vimeo.com/424237420> Password: *employeesback*.

**Daily Health Screening Assessments:** All employees who are currently reporting to work and those who are returning must complete a daily health screening assessment **beginning June 15<sup>th</sup>** for each day they are at the worksite, either before or within an hour of reporting to work. This entails answering three Yes/No questions. Employees can access the daily health screening assessment via MyUAlbany [Employee Portal](#) (the link should be active June 15<sup>th</sup>). Paper assessment forms are available for those without web access. Supervisors will receive an email when their employees scheduled to be at work have reported and are **responsible for tracking compliance** of this requirement. Supervisors must follow up with employees scheduled to be at the worksite who have not reported. You will receive instructions regarding employees not permitted to be onsite based on the assessment.

**Childcare Coverage:** If an employee presents with childcare coverage issues such that they assert that they are unable to return to the workplace due to childcare being unavailable due to COVID-19 closures, direct the employee to contact RF Human Resources [RFHR@albany.edu](mailto:RFHR@albany.edu) or 518-437-4500.

**Medical Conditions / Vulnerable Persons:** If an employee states that they cannot return to the workplace due to a medical condition or disability, direct the employee to contact RF Human Resources at 518-437-4500. If the employee states that they are concerned about the risk of infection, advise them that the University is taking all necessary and required precautions and combined with their own personal responsibility for following protocols, risk being on campus is very limited.

COVID-19 and the concerns surrounding the return of our workforce are complex and present with unique situations. We anticipate there will be questions, concerns and issues that arise. Supervisors are not alone and various University offices stand ready to assist you. If you have questions, please first speak with your immediate supervisor. You and your supervisor can determine which office (EH&S, Facilities or RF HR) to contact in the event that you need assistance. Please use your best judgment and reference the Return to Work Guidelines as needed.

We thank you for your dedication, hard work and commitment to maintaining a healthy and safe workplace for our employees and the students we serve.

Sincerely,

**Tracey A. Williams**

Director, RF Human Resources

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