



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Return to Office (or On-Site Work) Policy Policy Template/Guide -- 2020

This policy provides guidance for the over 300 employees, and 72 local office worksites utilized across the state by Division of Extension Employees, as well as for employees with office worksites on UW-Madison campus. It can be utilized as a template or guide for your organization to create an over-arching policy that provides a framework for other necessary pieces for responding to COVID-19. Further guidance for returning to office spaces can be found at:

- WEDC Re-opening Guidelines - <https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines/>
- **WEDC Best Practices to Reopen - General Guidance for All Businesses** - https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WEDC_COVID-19-GENERAL-Guidelines.pdf
- **WEDC Guidance on Preparing Workplaces** - https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WEDC_COVID-19-Public-Facilities-Guidelines.pdf
- WEDC – Commercial Office Spaces - <https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/COVID-19-Professional-Guidelines.pdf>

The following policy regarding workplaces is currently in place, but may change depending on the number of COVID-19 infections in Wisconsin, guidance from entities such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Wisconsin Department of Health Services, and UW-Madison policies. *This policy is current and will be updated as conditions evolve.*

The Division of Extension response to COVID-19, and associated decisions and guidance, are based upon current research and direction from federal and state health agencies and aligned with state and UW-Madison policies. Extension's priority is to protect the health and safety of our staff as well as others that we serve and work with.

I. Work Location Guidance

What is your organization's expectations around telecommuting?

Supervisors can approve an employee's request to work in the office for a modest amount of time if it is deemed necessary because of the following reason:

- If telecommuting interferes with your ability to fulfill the obligations for your position and the mission of the organization, you may be approved to work partially in the office, or on-site, by your supervisor with additional safety measures and potential limitations (such as limited duration) in place. Supervisors may consider the following factors when considering a request:
 - Specific knowledge of equipment operation or other area of expertise that is needed on site.
 - Work/programming cannot be performed effectively via distance technology

- In-person attendance at meetings or in-person office presence is considered essential, mission critical or of essential support to critical partnerships.
- Office hours open to the public

Safety measures for those employees approved to work occasionally in the office or on-site are outlined later in this guidance.

Supervisors will be required to develop [Workplace-specific Safety Plans](#) for cleaning, disinfecting, and arranging office spaces as preparation for a return to the office by more staff in the future. Plans should include review of current custodial practices, analysis of hazards, and identification of workplace controls.

II. Approval and Decision-Making Process

Who will approve activities of the employee, will exceptions be made? What types of activities will require approvals?

Approval for employee travel, office presence, and in person meetings will be made at the supervisor level; exceptions to this policy will require approval by [insert](#). All requests need to be coordinated with your supervisor.

1. **Employees may request approval to travel to/for critical partner meetings (i.e. that your organization is not organizing) – employees work with supervisor to discuss and approve the request. Critical partner meetings will very likely be limited to [INSERT description here](#). Participation should be limited to key individuals and preference will be toward supervisor representing your organization at the meeting. Whenever possible, it is recommended that we request (or support) options to join meetings remotely.**

Meetings that are not organized by [your organization](#) should ideally follow health and safety guidelines for number of participants, social distancing, masks, disinfecting and protection. Additional measures to understand prior to requesting approval to attend critical meetings include:

- Will other participants be wearing masks?
- Is the meeting outdoors or indoors?
- Can attendance be limited in duration?
- Is sufficient space available to allow social distancing?
- Are all health and safety precautions being taken?
- Is a critical decision being made during the meeting?

CONSIDER: What is your organization's policy about your employees attending other in-person meetings/events where safety protocols might not be followed?

[Organization](#) encourages early communication with partners regarding our guidelines and protection of health and safety and seeking of safe, creative alternatives if meetings cannot occur remotely. Employees will be supported in leaving a meeting in support of their own health and safety. If employees have concerns communicating expectations

with partners, they may request support from their supervisors to communicate on their behalf.

2. **Employees may seek approval for educational/in-person programming** (any educational activity, hosted or sponsored by our organization) through completion of a Program Planning Checklist). Refer to the [Program Approval Guidance](#) for more details.
3. **Employees may request to work a modest of time in the office until further notice** – employees need to coordinate with their supervisor on office schedule and time limitations. If supported, their supervisor coordinates time in the office and ensures safety measures.
4. What criteria would your organization use to approve time worked in the office?

How will exceptions to the policy be decided? By whom?

How will requests by employees be made? Stored?

All approval requests must be made in writing to your AED for county locations, or supervisor for other locations, via email prior to the meeting or time in office. The written request must include specific information about dates, times, and purpose and necessary need for working from the office. It is critical that employee location is documented. Until this documentation process is determined, temporary documentation should be kept.

III. Office Safety Measures Refer to document titled “Safety Plan for Returning to Extension Workplaces During COVID-19 Pandemic”.

Safety is critical during every office visit. Employees must follow safety guidelines as informed by the CDC, DHS and local public health offices including:

Personal Health: Stay home if you are experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19, have had known contact with anyone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or if you are otherwise ill. Please refer to the [Extension Infectious Disease Response Plan](#) for a list of symptoms and self-monitoring requirements. If you have any concerns about being in the office or attending critical meetings, speak with your supervisor.

Social Distancing and Disinfection: The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. Increasing the physical distance between individuals reduces the risk of airborne transmission of COVID-19, which is considered to be the primary route of exposure.

- Always maintain a separation of at least 6 feet from other individuals, including at entrances.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Hand sanitizing equipment must be readily available and used frequently.
- In indoor office environments, individuals must wear protective face coverings (unless an individual is alone in an enclosed private office with a closed door).
 - CONSIDER: who will your employees contact if they have concerns about wearing face coverings?

- Wipe down all common and high touch surfaces (e.g. door handles, light switches, desk surfaces, common equipment) with a disinfectant before and after use. *NOTE -this is not for 'regular' cleaning, but for 'confidence cleaning' before/after on hard surfaces.*

CONSIDER: how will cleaning supplies and PPE be provided onsite and for your employees?

Minimum employee densities:

Physical presence at the office must be time staggered such that physical contact is limited.

Considerations include:

- Limit the number and density of people in any building space at one time.
- Available space and configurations for ensuring safe distances between employees.
- Minimize overlapping times present in the office for staff. Staggered work shifts are strongly encouraged.
- Limit any contact in shared spaces such as restrooms, kitchen areas, supply/work rooms, elevators, etc.

IV. Training

What training will you require? Click here to view our training

Each person returning to on-site work will be required to complete mandatory online training. UW-Madison's required training includes basic information about COVID-19, physical distancing and hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, the use of personal protective equipment, and other best practices for reducing exposure risks. Extension-specific training is also required; it contains three modules (two are required by all Extension employees returning to workplaces; the third is required in conjunction with programming).

Resources:

WEDC Best practices to Reopen - General Guidance for all businesses -

https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WEDC_COVID-19-GENERAL-Guidelines.pdf

WEDC Guidance on Preparing Workplaces [https://wedc.org/wp-](https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WEDC_COVID-19-Public-Facilities-Guidelines.pdf)

[content/uploads/2020/05/WEDC_COVID-19-Public-Facilities-Guidelines.pdf](https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WEDC_COVID-19-Public-Facilities-Guidelines.pdf)

CDC: Cloth Face Coverings Questions and Answers -

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-faq.html#:~:text=Cloth%20face%20coverings%20should%20not,the%20cover%20without%20assistance.>

CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>

Returning to Campus Safely - While this guidance is not directly applicable to returning to a partner office location (e.g. a county office facility), this website provides valuable resources from UW-Madison related to office safety practices and related items.

<https://facilities.fpm.wisc.edu/returning-to-campus-safely/>