



Addressing Concerns about Returning to the Worksite during a Pandemic (COVID-19)

A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE HUMAN RESOURCES

As state employees gradually return to their office worksite(s) from remote options, we understand that many employees are concerned about safety as well as the changes to policies and procedures that may have been implemented. We want every employee to be assured that their concerns are being taken seriously. To address these concerns, this guide provides information about **communication and compliance checklist** for state employees.

COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Direct your questions regarding return to worksites processes to your direct supervisor or Agency Human Resources Office.
- During this communication, be detailed about your concerns and recommendations that you believe are necessary to protect yourself.
- Talk to your manager if you have concerns specific to your circumstances, such as a health condition that places you or someone in your household at higher risk (as defined by the CDC).
- Ask what the employer is doing to prepare for the return to worksite. For instance:
 - How will personal protective measures be provided to employees, including those at higher risk (as defined by the CDC). Are face coverings required?
 - What are the processes to comply with social distancing protocols, including how to resume in-person meetings, conferences, and trainings?
 - What are the procedures to resume employee business travel, if applicable?
 - How will positive cases of COVID-19 be handled in the workplace?
- Ask what you can do as an employee to prepare for the return to the worksite. For instance:
 - What is the policy when an employee feels sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19?
 - What are required cleaning procedures that employees must follow?
- Ask for information about leave options that may be available to assist you with the transition back to the worksite.
- Request information about what additional information or resources would be helpful for the agency to provide to you during this time.
- Remember that the North Carolina Employee Assistance Program (NC EAP) is a free state-sponsored benefit program that offers support and resources to address personal or work-related challenges and concerns. Simply call 888-298-3907 or 704-717-5295 to access NC EAP.

Note: Judicial Branch employees use Deer Oaks and UNC System employees use ComPsych.

COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

- Consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers may make accommodations to employees in “high risk categories” for developing severe response to COVID-19 if the employee has an underlying medical condition(s) that can be evaluated for reasonable accommodation, barring undue hardship.

- An employer can send home an employee with COVID-19 or symptoms associated with it.

- Because the CDC and state/local health authorities have acknowledged community spread of COVID-19 and issued attendant precautions as of March 2020, employers may measure employees’ body temperature to determine if they have a fever.

- An employer may require its employees to adopt infection-control practices at the worksite. This may include regular hand washing, coughing and sneezing etiquette, and proper tissue usage and disposal, does not implicate the ADA.

- An employer may require employees to wear personal protective equipment (e.g., face masks, gloves) during a pandemic. However, where an employee with a disability needs a related reasonable accommodation under the ADA (e.g., non-latex gloves, or gowns designed for individuals who use wheelchairs), the employer should provide these, absent undue hardship.

- An employer may screen job applicants for symptoms of COVID-19 after making a conditional job offer, if it does so for all entering employees in the same type of job.

Employers can require employees/contractors to follow workplace infection control practices and PPE requirements at any state facility, even if those requirements vary at different locations.
