

Dear Faculty and Staff Colleagues,

We recognize the university's strong commitment to providing a safe and healthy environment for our students, faculty and staff, as well as visitors to campus. COVID-19 has given us the opportunity and challenge to consider how best to modify leave policies in support of a healthy campus community. We seek flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable faculty, staff, and students to stay home or self-isolate when they are sick, have been exposed, or are caring for someone who is sick.

Cabinet, with recommendations from Human Resources and the Faculty and Staff Senate leadership, has approved two ongoing [Staff Sick Leave policy](#) changes.

The previous Staff Sick Leave policy provided an accrual of sick leave benefits per pay period to benefit eligible staff. New, or fairly new, staff members did not have the opportunity to accrue sufficient paid leave for a longer illness. To address this concern, all newly hired benefits-eligible staff will be provided with the equivalent of 12 days of paid sick leave on their first day of employment. They may use this sick leave balance for salary continuation immediately for qualified circumstances as outlined in the policy. At the beginning of the second year of employment, any unused sick leave balance would carry over and the staff member would begin receiving regular pay period accruals.

The previous Staff Sick Leave policy did not allow for negative sick leave balances. Staff members who have chronic conditions (or family members with chronic conditions) might have a zero sick leave balance and must take leave without pay. To address this concern, the sick leave balance will be allowed to go into arrears up to the equivalent of 12 days. A negative sick leave balance is "borrowing" from a future benefit. If the sick leave balance goes into the negative, future accruals will be used to offset the negative balance.

Cabinet has approved short term (COVID-19) additional benefits to address time off work for quarantine or isolation.

For clarity, we use the following definitions from [Washington State Department of Health guidelines](#), which are subject to change:

Self-Quarantine vs. Self-Isolation

- ✓ A faculty or staff member who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 must **self-quarantine** at home and away from others for 14 days.
- ✓ A faculty or staff member who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 AND is feeling sick themselves should contact their health care provider for a test and must **self-isolate** until they are fever free (without meds) for three days AND symptoms have improved AND at least 10 days have passed since the symptoms first appeared.
- ✓ A faculty or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19, but has had no symptoms, must isolate for at least 10 days from the positive COVID-19 test date if they have had no subsequent illness.

Work Related Exposure to COVID-19

Faculty: Self-quarantine:

- ✓ Faculty who are required to self-quarantine because of potential exposure to COVID-19 in the Puget Sound workplace will be able to work remotely.

Faculty: Self-isolate:

- ✓ Faculty who are required to self-isolate and are able to work remotely (mild or no symptoms), may continue to work remotely and be paid as normal.
- ✓ Faculty who are required to self-isolate and are unable to work as a result of exposure to COVID-19 in the Puget Sound workplace must file a workers' compensation claim for time loss payments and medical expenses, and the university would "top off" the time loss payment with paid administrative leave to make their salary whole.

Staff: Self quarantine:

- ✓ Staff who are required to self-quarantine due to potential exposure to COVID-19 in the Puget Sound workplace and are able to work remotely during the quarantine period, will continue to work remotely and be paid as normal.
- ✓ Staff who are required to self-quarantine because of potential exposure to COVID-19 in the Puget Sound workplace and who are unable to work remotely because of the nature of their position, will be paid "administrative leave" at their normal rate without having to utilize accrued leave balances.

Staff: Self-isolate:

- ✓ Staff who are required to self-isolate as a result of exposure to COVID-19 in the Puget Sound workplace and are able to work remotely (mild or no symptoms), may continue to work remotely and be paid as normal.
- ✓ Staff who are required to self-isolate and unable to work as a result of exposure to COVID-19 in the Puget Sound workplace must file a workers' compensation claim for time loss payments and medical expenses, and the university would "top off" the time loss payment with paid administrative leave to make their salary whole.

How do I know if I was exposed at work?

Work exposure to COVID-19 is identified through Puget Sound's contact tracing program, as administered by CHWS following public health guidelines.

Non Work Related Exposure to COVID-19

Faculty:

- ✓ Faculty who are required to self-quarantine due to potential exposure to COVID-19 outside the workplace, may continue to work remotely and be paid as normal.
- ✓ Faculty who are required to self-isolate and unable to work as a result of exposure to COVID-19 outside the workplace, will continue to be paid in accordance with the [faculty leave policy](#).

Staff:

- ✓ Staff who are required to self-quarantine because of potential exposure to COVID-19 outside of the Puget Sound workplace and who are unable to work remotely because of the nature of their position, will utilize their accrued leave balances.
- ✓ Staff who are required to self-isolate and unable to work as a result of exposure to COVID-19 unrelated to the workplace, will utilize their accrued leave balances.

FMLA and Washington Paid Family & Medical Leave:

- ✓ FMLA and/or Washington Paid Family & Medical Leave may apply during the self-isolation period if the individual meets the eligibility requirements and if their healthcare provider certifies the illness meets the definition of a serious health condition. A one week waiting period would apply; accrued paid leave could be used for the first week. This would apply to faculty and staff.

Human Resources is working on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and will post on our website. Please contact us at hr@pugetsound.edu with your questions or comments.

Sincerely,
Cindy

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