



Guidance for MCCS Employees During the COVID-19 Pandemic

March 18, 2020

The following guidelines and practices have been adopted to provide support and clarity to Maine Community College System (MCCS) employees during the current phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The conditions, guidelines and practices expressed here will be reviewed and updated regularly and may be modified as conditions and federal and state guidance evolve. MCCS will be posting any changes and additions to this guidance at <https://www.mccs.me.edu/covid19-employees/>.

1. In spite of the dramatic disruptions our colleges are facing, the work of the colleges and the system continues. Each of the community colleges and the system office is working to build the supports employees need to continue their work, whether at home or at your normal place of work. We sincerely appreciate the continued cooperation of our employees as we work to address the specific needs of our individual colleges and our students.
2. As you are aware, all instruction that can be moved to online or distance learning is being moved as quickly as possible. The purpose of this move is to protect the health and safety of the students, faculty, staff and communities that Maine's community colleges serve. Our goal is to provide academic continuity wherever possible. We will be working with regular and adjunct faculty and staff to make the transition to online learning as efficient as possible.
3. Given these extraordinary circumstances, we will endeavor to keep all employees in pay status regardless of your work location. At this time, the issue of whether an employee has available sick or vacation time is secondary. Under these unique and extraordinary conditions and notwithstanding the otherwise applicable provisions of the collective bargaining agreements and system policy, you will not be obligated to use paid time off. You must care for yourself and your families, and the colleges want to support you in that effort.

During these challenging times, we will seek your assistance in supporting the colleges and the system office. Depending upon your position, you may be required to assist other departments and to work on tasks different from your normal duties. We will work with you to implement any such changes.

4. The colleges and system office will ask certain employees to report to work on campus to assist with essential functions. Each college will notify employees whose work is considered an essential function on campus. Recognizing that individuals may face unique challenges during the pandemic, especially in relation to child care, we will work with on-campus essential employees to develop flexible scheduling when possible.
5. Employees who require access to PowerFAIDS, J1, EX and other enterprise applications in order to perform the essential functions of their positions must use a college-issued laptop while working remotely. Across the system, we are working on repurposing, purchasing and setting up laptops for use by remote workers, with priority given to those employees who must access the enterprise applications. VPN access to college and system networks will not be installed on personal computers or devices. Employees who currently use a remote desktop service to access college networks from their personal computer may continue to do so. Employees whose functions do not require access to the enterprise applications can use their personal computer to access the systems they need through their college's portal. Each college has a link to its webmail, either on its public website or on its college portal, which employees should use for their college-related email needs.
6. The CDC has recommended that employers not request doctors' notes from employees who are ill in order to reduce strain on the health care system. Notwithstanding the collective bargaining agreements, and under these unique circumstances, we will not seek doctors' notes of those who miss work because of illness.
7. Although you may be working from home, if you are an hourly worker performing functions from your home you are still obligated under federal and state law to track your time worked including noting times when you take more than a normal work break and the time you resume work. If you normally track your time on paper, you may do so by email and submit to your supervisor for approval.
8. Students whose college employment is funded through the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program will continue to be in pay status as well. The US DOE guidance on this subject states: "If you're unable to work your scheduled hours because of coronavirus-related disruptions (such as school or employer closures or student quarantines), your school may pay you for any scheduled hours or allow you to work by another means—for example, completing work online or remotely, depending on the job. Contact your school for more information."

Thank you for your continued cooperation and understanding as we try to navigate these unprecedented circumstances.