

MCLA  
**WORKPLACE  
RETURN  
GUIDE**



# CONTENTS

Version 1 – July 1, 2020

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Return to the Workplace</b> .....	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Workplace Expectations & Guidelines .....	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Return to Work Plan .....	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication.....	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Travel Guidelines .....	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Training Requirements.....	6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Symptom &amp; Exposure Guidance</b> .....	6
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-Symptom Monitoring Requirements .....	6
<input type="checkbox"/>	Exposure/Potential Exposure .....	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Health &amp; Safety Guidance</b> .....	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal Safety Practices .....	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Facemasks .....	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social distancing.....	9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Handwashing .....	9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cleaning/Disinfection .....	9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coughing/Sneezing Hygiene.....	9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Guidance for Specific Workplace Scenarios.....	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Working in the Office Environment .....	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meetings .....	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mental and Emotional Well-being.....	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee Assistance Program .....	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Enter/Exit Control</b> .....	11

## INTRODUCTION

MCLA's protocols for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic are based in providing an environment that is as safe as possible for the return to campus of our staff, faculty and students.

The primary goals for MCLA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic are to protect public health, and continue the institution's vital mission of providing a public liberal arts education.

MCLA's plans will be aligned and consistent with local orders and ordinances of the Cities of North Adams and Pittsfield, as well as Massachusetts' Phased Reopening Model. MCLA's plans will also follow recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and other laws applicable to the workplace.

MCLA's approach provides a phased reentry to the workplace addressing key considerations for our workforce, workspaces and operations.

Our knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 virus continue to evolve, and our policies and plans will be updated as appropriate as more information becomes available through guidance and orders as directed by the Governor of Massachusetts and other state and federal authorities.

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# RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE

## Workplace Expectations & Guidelines

All staff are expected to comply with protocols and guidelines outlined in this document as part of MCLA's return to work plans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Return to Work Plan

MCLA staff will return in phases and limited capacity beginning on July 6, 2020. Return will be managed based on the operational needs specific to individual departments, the needs and challenges faced by faculty and staff, and guidance from the Commonwealth.

This phased approach may include a staggered return of staff (i.e. department staff working in the office on alternate days or weeks) to allow for the identification of unforeseen modifications to work environments, and issues that will need to be addressed.

It is anticipated that by the beginning of August staff who have not applied for and been granted the temporary ability to continue to telecommute for qualifying circumstances will return to campus. By the beginning of the Fall semester, faculty who have not applied for and been granted the temporary ability to continue to teach remotely for qualifying circumstances, will return to campus.

Regarding the ability to continue to temporarily telecommute or remotely teach, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance states that adults age 65 and over and people of any age with certain serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. In addition, the college is aware of employees who either have a vulnerable family member with a serious underlying medical condition within the household or who lack childcare during this public health emergency. To help address these circumstances, there is a process to follow to request temporary continued telecommuting should an employee need to request an extension of their telecommuting assignment as a result of being in a high-risk category identified by the CDC, having a vulnerable family member within the immediate household in a high-risk category or having a lack of childcare.

Faculty members who need to continue to teach remotely for the Fall 2020 semester due to the circumstances mentioned above must complete MCLA's Online Training Course or OTC Refresher Course and must show appropriate and frequent use of Canvas, MCLA's learning management system.

The process outlines the medical conditions that might place a person at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. The communication about this process and accompanying forms to apply can be found here: [Temporary Telecommuting Continuation](#)

Faculty and staff will not be evaluated and/or subject to disparate treatment based on vulnerable, high risk or other protected status as defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Consideration will be given to those who are at most risk for exposure, such as those in high-risk categories or those whose jobs cannot easily accommodate social distancing.

Not all positions are feasible for telecommuting; the responsibilities of the position and operational needs of the college are among the considerations when reviewing a temporary telework/remote teaching request.

Employees who cannot successfully work from home and have child-care or other family-care needs should be informed about possible paid leave options, such as the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Information about options available under this Act can be found at the link below. Employees interested in learning more about FFCRA leave eligibility and/or other leave options such as use of accrued, unused benefit time should contact Human Resources for assistance.

[FFCRA Poster](#)

## Communication

During all phases of returning to work MCLA administrators will continue to communicate regularly with staff and faculty with updates related to changes in process, protocols and local, state and federal guidelines.

All written communications, as well as updates, additional information and links, will be available on the college's [COVID-19 webpage](#).

Employees should continue to contact their supervisor with questions or concerns about operating needs. As well, supervisors will continue to engage their teams, and conduct regular check-ins with employees regarding updates, well-being, protocols and practices in the work environment.

## Travel Guidelines

Regarding travel, links to the most recent advisories from the Commonwealth and the U.S. Department of State are provided here:

[Covid-19 International Travel Advisories](#)  
[Travel Advisory Alert-Global level 4 health advisory issue](#)

Both state and federal government agencies advise against traveling internationally. Those who travel against advice are required to self-quarantine for 14 days upon their return. All travelers arriving to Massachusetts – including Massachusetts residents returning home – are instructed to self-quarantine for 14 days, except that, beginning July 1, 2020, travelers from Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, New York and New Jersey arriving in Massachusetts are exempt from the directive and need not self-quarantine for 14 days.

If you travel internationally or to any of the states NOT listed above, please notify Human Resources. Please also register with the U.S. State Department's Smart Travel Enrollment Program (STEP) which provides access to alerts from the local embassies and Consulates.

## Training Requirements

All faculty and staff are expected to complete training on social distancing and hygiene protocols, which will be provided through Dynamic Forms. Additional training on new protocols and practices will be provided as needed based on local, state and federal guidance.

# SYMPTOM & EXPOSURE GUIDANCE

## Self-Symptom Monitoring Requirement

Faculty and staff who have been instructed to return to the workplace must conduct symptom monitoring every day before reporting to work. You must be free of ANY symptoms potentially related to COVID-19. These symptoms include one or more of the following:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Congestion or runny nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- New GI symptoms (nausea/vomiting/diarrhea)
- New loss of taste or smell



Employees who exhibit symptoms should not report to work and should contact their primary care physician and Berkshire Health Systems (BHS) COVID-19 hotline for guidance and testing. BHS's toll-free hotline for questions regarding the novel coronavirus is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days a week at: 855-262-5465. As well, employees should contact their supervisor to notify them that they will not report to work, and to receive guidance regarding their return.

## Exposure/Potential Exposure to COVID-19

In addition to the symptoms related to COVID-19, it is important that employees consider the following questions:

- Have you or anyone you have been in close contact with been diagnosed with COVID-19, or been placed on quarantine for possible contact with COVID-19?
- Have you been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by a medical professional or a local public health official?

Employees who have been in close contact with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 or placed on quarantine for possible contact with COVID-19, or have themselves been asked to self-isolate or quarantine, should not report to work. Contact should be made with a primary care physician and Berkshire Health Systems (BHS) COVID-19 hotline for guidance and testing. BHS's toll-free hotline for questions regarding the novel coronavirus is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days a week at: 855-262-5465. As well, employees should contact their supervisor to notify them that they will not report to work, and to receive guidance regarding their return.

A positive COVID-19 test should be reported to Human Resources and the employee should not report to work.

## HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDANCE

As a community, each of us is accountable for the health and safety of ourselves and our campus members. Maintaining the well-being of our campus community requires the collective efforts of us all. Upon return to campus, staff and faculty will receive two cloth face masks, hand sanitizer, and a contactless door opening device.

Staff and faculty are to follow the outlined practices detailed below:

### Personal Safety Practices

**Face Masks/Face Coverings:** The College will provide cloth face masks to faculty and staff, and all are expected to follow Massachusetts state guidelines regarding the wearing of face masks/face coverings. Follow this link to the Governor's order: [Massachusetts Masks and Face Coverings](#)





Employees are expected to:

- report to work with an appropriate face covering
- have a face covering or mask with them at all times during their work day
- wear a face covering or mask when they cannot maintain a distance of at least six feet from another person

If employees should choose to wear disposable masks, they should be worn for one day and then must be placed in the trash.

Employees who for medical reasons cannot wear a face covering or mask should contact Human Resources.

Employees who do not wear a mask or face covering when social distancing is not possible, and who do not meet the medical criterion, will be sent home and required to use their own personal, vacation or comp time. It is our hope that this situation will not occur as we all do our best each day to protect one another from the transmission of COVID-19. For extenuating circumstances, a limited supply of disposable face masks will be available with various department administrative assistants. Employees should not be reliant on this supply.

The following instructions are provided as **guidance only and do not guarantee the prevention of transmission of the COVID-19 virus.**

Putting on the face covering/disposable mask:

- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to handling the face covering/disposable mask.
- Ensure the face-covering/disposable mask fits over the nose and under the chin.
- Situate the face-covering/disposable mask properly with nose wire snug against the nose (where applicable).
- Tie straps behind the head and neck or loop around the ears.
- Throughout the process: Avoid touching the front of the face covering/disposable mask.

Taking off the face covering/disposable mask:

- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when removing the face covering/disposable mask.
- When taking off the face covering/disposable mask, loop your finger into the strap and pull the strap away from the ear, or untie the straps.
- Wash hands immediately after removing.

Care, storage and laundering:

- Keep face coverings/disposable masks stored in a paper bag when not in use.
- Cloth face coverings should not be used more than one day at a time and should be washed after use. Cloth face coverings should be properly laundered with regular clothing detergent before first use, and after each shift. Cloth face coverings should be replaced immediately if soiled, damaged (e.g. ripped, punctured) or visibly contaminated.
- Disposable masks must not be used for more than one day and should be placed in the trash after your shift or if it is soiled, damaged (e.g., stretched ear loops, torn or punctured material) or visibly contaminated.



For additional details regarding cloth face coverings, including how to create, wear and care for home-made face coverings, please visit the CDC website.

**Social Distancing:** Keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to the COVID-19 virus and slowing its spread. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others when possible, even if you have no symptoms. Social distancing is important for everyone, especially to help protect people who are at higher risk of getting sick.

Employees on campus should maintain a distance of at least six feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people when able, being particularly mindful when in enclosed spaces.

For now, gatherings of 10 or more should be avoided. Technology resources should continue to be utilized for meetings, even after faculty and staff return to campus. When meeting in person is required, meeting spaces should be large enough to allow for social distancing of all attendees.

**Handwashing:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash your hands after touching your face.

**Cleaning/Disinfection:** Facilities teams will follow an enhanced cleaning protocol, addressing common areas as employees are phased in for return to work, and assessing needs as students return to campus. Disinfectant cleaner will be provided to departments for maintaining personal workspaces and common high-touch surfaces, such as printers, copiers, door handles, light switches, desks and tables. Employees are responsible for cleaning their personal work areas using this disinfectant cleaner.

Sharing of personal workspace and tools/devices should be avoided (e.g. phones, computer keyboards/mice, staplers, pens/pencils, markers, erasers). Where sharing occurs, employees should take measures to clean all touched surfaces before and after use.

Facilities Management will maintain hand-sanitizer stations at major building entrances, elevator stops and high-traffic areas.

**Coughing/Sneezing Hygiene:** If you are in a private setting and do not have on your cloth face covering, remember to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Then throw used tissues in the trash. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with hand sanitizer.



## Guidance for Specific Workplace Scenarios

**Working in Office Environments:** Departments either have already, or will continue to, assess open work environments and meeting rooms to institute measures to physically separate and increase distance between people, such as:

- Place visual cues such as floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate social distancing and face covering measures.
- Place one-way directional signage for large open work spaces with multiple through-ways to increase distance between employees moving through the space.
- Consider designating specific stairways for up or down traffic if building space allows.
- Consider designating specific entrance/exit doorways.

A face covering is not required if you are working alone in your office space. Masks/face coverings should be worn when inside any MCLA facility where others are present, including walking in narrow hallways where others travel and in break rooms, conference rooms and other meeting locations.

**Meetings:** Convening in groups increases the risk of viral transmission. Where feasible, meetings should be held in whole or part using technology.

In person meetings are limited to the restrictions of local, state and federal orders and should not exceed 50 percent of a room's capacity, assuming individuals can still maintain six feet of separation for social distancing requirements. Departments should remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in meeting rooms to support social distancing practices between attendees. All attendees should wear a mask or face covering while sharing space in a common room.

During your time on-site, you are encouraged to communicate with your colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, instant message, telephone or other available technology rather than face-to-face.

## Mental and Emotional Well-being

Higher Ed Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential resource that is always available to employees and their families, and could be especially helpful during this stressful period. Higher Ed EAP is staffed by licensed counselors who respond quickly, with care and respect, to requests for help. It is important that each of us focuses on self-care and resiliency, and EAP has resources to assist with employee needs.

EAP can be reached by telephone at 800.252.4555 and online at [www.theEAP.com/Higher-Education-EAP](http://www.theEAP.com/Higher-Education-EAP).

Health insurance benefits also include access to mental health services and employees should avail themselves of these services as desired.

In addition, the Commonwealth website has resources relative to maintaining emotional well-being: [Massachusetts COVID-19 Well-being](#)

# ENTER/EXIT CONTROL

When entering/exiting buildings at the start and end of shifts, employees should pay particular attention to maintaining social distance and wearing face coverings. At this time, buildings do not have designated entrance and exit doors, but as population on campus increases this is likely to change.

At this time only employees of the College will be allowed on campus. Access for visitors, including friends, family, vendors and contractors, should be discussed with supervisors.

## Signage and Posters

Building occupants and visitors are expected to follow signage on traffic flow through building entrances, exits, elevator usage and similar common use areas.

