Managing Staff during the COVID-19: Pandemic Guidance for Managers

Updated: April 14, 2020
Outline of Guidance

• 12 Common and Critical Questions Answered
• NSU HR Business Partners
• General Telework Guidance
• Technology Guidance and Support
• Additional Resources for Managers
Question #1: Why are we instituting telework?

- During the COVID-19 health crisis, many organizations across the U.S. are mandating social distancing and other health precautions.

- Gov. Northam has issued an executive order to Stay at Home.

- To encourage social distancing, NSU implemented an interim telecommuting/alternative work policy and sign-off form (effective March 20, 2020) Click here to access the policy.

- The general guidance is that no more than 10 people should congregate in any area, including workplaces.

- NSU leadership has asked that managers move as all employees to a work-from-home arrangement unless employees have been designated as essential.
Question #2: Is NSU still open for business?

• NSU is officially open - Critical functions must take place, such as instruction and support service for students, staff, and faculty still on campus

• Business is not as usual because many employees are now performing functions at home

• Local, state or federal mandates may change our status at any point in time. Stay informed by accessing the [NSU COVID-19 page](https://www.nsu.edu/covid-19)

• Some departments may alter hours, stagger staff, or change usual operations and procedures depending on the function of the department
Question #3: Is the campus safe?

• Measures have been implemented to ensure safety for those who must come on the campus
• Work-related travel has been eliminated and employees have been advised to self-quarantine for 14 days if they have traveled overseas
• Facilities personnel has enhanced cleaning and sanitization practices
• Guests/patrons have limited access to campus
• All employees can help!

  • Email or call departments to conduct business instead of going to the department.
  • Adhere to social distancing
  • Wash your hands frequently
  • Use alcohol-based sanitizer when washing is impossible
  • Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve
  • Stay home if you’re not feeling well
Question #4: How long will the teleworking last?

• NSU leadership is monitoring local, state, and federal mandates/guidelines daily to ensure the university makes necessary changes to any plans

• All eligible employees should be teleworking if possible

• NSU will continue to follow all mandates and guidelines

• Teleworking is a limited and temporary arrangement to address this health crisis and does not imply a permanent work situation

• Please be patient and understanding with each other as we are all figuring out a new way to work and communicate
Question #5: Do all employees need to sign the telework policy?

• Yes, we are asking that all employees read the Interim Telecommuting and Alternative Work policy and complete the form, have a manager sign it, and scan it and send it to tdjeffery@nsu.edu or the forms can be sent to the Office of Human Resources via interoffice mail – **NOTE**: Please do not bring the forms to the Office of Human Resources in person.

• The Telecommuting and Alternative Work policy is temporary and is only intended during the coronavirus pandemic – employees will be notified when it is safe to return to your campus office.

• If anyone has a question about the policy, contact your area manager or VP, or call the Office of Human Resources at 757-823-8160.
Question #6: I have hourly/wage and contract employees. Do they continue working with us?

- VPs, Directors, and managers should determine if hourly, wage and contract employees need to continue to work – the Office of Human Resources cannot make these decisions but can advise.

- Managers may ask wage/hourly/contract employees to do other work assignments and may ask employees to cover other areas or tasks.

- All wage, hourly and contract employees must keep a log of every hour worked with a work description – it is best to monitor these logs weekly.

- Hourly/wage/contract employees may be separated or furloughed if there is not reasonable work available. Contact your area VP before separating/furloughing any of these employees.

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Question #7: What is the criteria for determining which wage/hourly/contract staff should be retained?

- Criteria for deciding includes (but not limited to):
  - Does the employee have specific work tasks that are essential to operations for the employee?
  - Is there a skillset the employee possesses that can be used in other areas or for projects?
  - Can the employee be supervised?
  - Does the employee have excellent performance and work ethic so that I can trust the employee to complete tasks at home?
  - Has the employee been consistently employed since January 6th?
  - Can the employee accurately and independently record tasks and hours?
Question #8: How do I track hours and leave for non-exempt, full-time employees?

• Non-exempt employees (overtime eligible, classified employees) should continue to track and submit hours as usual, including overtime and leave.

• If working remotely, non-exempt employees must track all work hours (onsite or offsite).

• All employees should still submit appropriate leave if not working (sick, taking time off, etc.) following the process outlined in the email from HR on March 30.

• If an employee is sick or cannot work from home, there are state and federal provisions for making the pay of an employee pay whole due to the pandemic.

• Managers can use email to approve and verify timesheets.
Question #9: How does my department remain open for business when my staff is at home working?

• A department can still be open for business without the physical presence of employees – Some departments may need to have one person go physically to the department on occasion to accept/collect paperwork, open mail, etc.

• Forward your phone to your home or cell phone (preferred). Answer the phone as you would if you were in the NSU office

• **Do not** change your email to OUT OF OFFICE unless you are sick or taking time off

• Place signs/instructions on your door to direct any visitors, and make drop-off folders for non-urgent paperwork or provide information on where to electronically send documents

• Staff must answer emails and phone during standard published office hours (i.e. 8 a.m. – 5 p.m)
Question #10: Should I still apply disciplinary actions during this pandemic?

• Employees may be under stress, have anxiety, or need time to adjust to the changes, so be patient, compassionate and give everyone time and grace to get settled

• All managers should bring only critical, serious performance issues to Lisa Little (757) 823-8138

• Be clear about expectations, priorities, required documentation, and communication requirements, so that confusion and miscommunication is reduced

• Please refrain from contacting HR with issues that not are serious in nature, or are general work issues – Use your leadership skills to manage mild to moderate issues

• Do not distribute any formal discipline (Written Notice) or other written memos without contacting Lisa Little (757) 823-8138
Question #11: Should I still post my job openings and hire new staff?

• There is a statewide budget freeze, which includes hiring (effective April 3, 2020)

• Agencies will have to go through a process to justify any new hires for the reminder of 2020

• Review all of your openings with your VP, and consider if any positions should be requested for an exception

• For candidates you’ve already interviewed, contact your HR Business Partner to discuss communication with these candidates

• Stay tuned to future NSU communications and Commonwealth guidelines, for updates on the freeze
Question #12: How do I handle illnesses?

• If any employee has tested positive due to Coronavirus, is sick or impacted by Coronavirus, call your HR Business Partner to determine the best use of leave.

• **Any** employee who has been in contact with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 must quarantine for at least 14 days and call HR immediately.

• Encourage all of your employees to stay healthy and follow all federal Center for Disease Control [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) and state guidelines at the Virginia Department of Health [VDH](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov).

• If any essential employee on campus feels ill, believes they have cold/flu symptoms, fever, coughing, body aches, or other concerning symptoms send the employee home - Do not question or ask employees to prove he/she is sick. Contact your HR Business Partner (See the following slide for the HR Business Partner assigned to a respective department).
HR BUSINESS PARTNERS

Sarita Jordan
823-8160
smjordan@nsu.edu

Athletics
Career Services
College of Science, Eng., & Tech
Counseling
Enrollment Management
Facilities Management
Finance and Administration
Military Services/Veterans Affairs
School of Nursing
Student Advocacy
Student Center

Tyesha Murray
823-8160
tmmurray@nsu.edu

Academic Affairs/Provost
Audit
College Of Liberal Arts
Dean of Students
Housing and Residence Life
Office of Information Technology
School of Social Work
Student Support Services
Student Activities and Leadership
University Counsel
University Police

Joann Jones
823-8160
jmjones@nsu.edu

Graduate Studies and Research
Honors College
Human Resources
Marketing and Communications
OASIS
President’s Office
School of Business
School of Education
University Advancement
General Telework Guidance: Who should telework?

• Effective April 2, 2020, eligible staff/administrators should telework, with the exception of essential staff

• If you your employees need to stay on campus or physically come in, discuss with your VP first and then HR

• Review the general guidelines in the Interim Telework Policy. [Click here](#)

• Employees who have tasks that can be performed at home and can use a computer should telework

• Ensure your employees have everything they need to move to a work-at-home set up

• Review priorities/workload – Remind employees of the departmental communication and check-in plan

• Make a plan for how to stay engaged and have meetings virtually
General Telework Guidance: Essential Staff

• Essential personnel, such as police and residence services will stay on campus and receive direct assignments are given.

• Hourly/wage and contract employees must be deemed essential to stay on campus. All hours and work must be logged by the employee.

• All on campus essential employees must practice social distancing, wearing gloves, masks or other protective measures, and follow all other safe practices as outlined by the CDC.
General Telework Guidance: Communication with telework staff

• Give your team a sense of order, and accomplishment
• Have all employees check-in regularly by email, phone, or teleconference about questions, priorities, and check-ins
• *Do not over-manage or “monitor” employees.* Employees should be trusted to work as usual
• If an employee is struggling with working from home, call him/her to discuss the concerns, and create suggestions/solutions together
• Think of fun, team-building activities that can be done on Skype or phone, on the same day of the week to give everyone something to look forward to
• Assign new duties/priorities at least once a week and put in writing/email to avoid confusion
• Share tips and ideas daily on an email blast on how to stay motivated, focused and healthy
Technology Guidance and Support

• Discuss technology plan before or shortly after the employee begins teleworking

• If an employee does not have an NSU computer to use at home, call OIT for guidance and protocols on using other technology

• See OIT’s updated email on March 27, 2020. This gives guidance on how to get connected, connect phones, and other technology

• Use Skype to stay in touch with employees, and give a sense teamwork. Continue with regular team meetings, and keep communication going virtually. Everyone can practice using Skype!

• If there are any technical issues while your employees are teleworking, email the Help Desk at clientservices@nsu.edu or call (757) 823-8678

• Check email regularly for updates
Additional Resources for Managers

Below are additional resources for managers to review:

• From Department of Human Resources Management: [DHRM Coronavirus](#)

• Norfolk State Updates: [NSU Coronavirus](#)

• Employee Assistance Program: [EAP Information](#)

This Guidance Document will be updated periodically.