COVID-19 RESPONSE

CHARTING OUR COURSE

OUR RETURN-TO-WORK PLAN

FOR A SAFE RETURN TO CAMPUS

JULY 2020

VERSION 12 (7/3/2020)
OVERVIEW

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting health emergency, Middle Tennessee State University put into motion a plan in March 2020 that addressed mission-critical services and operations while working to protect the health and welfare of campus constituents. This COVID-19 Response Plan guided our successful remote delivery of instruction to students for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester, while maintaining limited on-campus activities, services and operations deemed essential.

This return-to-work document builds upon the elements of the COVID-19 Response Plan. It outlines a three-phase approach to safely and responsibly transition the University back to full academic and operational service levels. It is intended to provide information to aid the campus community for the gradual return of employees beginning Tuesday, June 16, 2020.

There are four priorities for this return-to-work plan:

- **Protecting the campus community’s health and welfare, which** includes students, faculty and staff as well as stakeholders, business partners and visitors. Given that the spread of COVID-19 is primarily person-to-person, this objective will require the proper participation and cooperation of everyone, on an individual basis, in addition to the University’s programmatic efforts.

- **Monitoring the appropriate health and emergency organizations** for information, guidance, and directives. These organizations include, but are not limited to, (1) U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); (2) World Health Organization (WHO); (3) Tennessee Department of Health (TNDOH); (4) Rutherford County Department of Health; (5) Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA); and (6) Rutherford County Emergency Management Agency (RCEMA).

- **Monitoring the appropriate University governing agencies and other organizations** for information, guidance, directives, and program implications. These organizations include, but are not limited to, (1) appropriate federal agencies; (2) State of Tennessee; (3) MTSU Board of Trustees; (4) Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC); (5) National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA); and (6) Conference USA (C-USA).

- **Communicating consistently and effectively with the campus community** regarding all decisions, directives, guidance, actions, and requirements associated with the elements of this plan.
THREE PHASES OF REOPENING THE UNIVERSITY

The President in March directed supervisors to reduce our employee footprint as a safety precaution. This included remote instruction, reduction of services on campus, reduced operations, remote work and paid leave for employees whose work could not be done remotely. These actions were consistent with the Tennessee Governor’s Executive Orders 22, 23, and 30.

On June 16, 2020, we will begin the first of three phases to return to work, including:

- **Phase 1 – Restoring On-Campus Services/Campus Partially Occupied (Gradual implementation, by division, beginning June 16, 2020):** Supervisors will work with the Provost and division vice presidents to designate certain employees to begin ramping up operations in preparation for the Fall 2020 semester. Services and functions will be prioritized and employee returns will be tailored to specific needs. In appropriate circumstances, employees will continue to work remotely or in hybrid work arrangements following the process in Policy 813 Alternate Work Arrangements. Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Extended Family Medical Leave as provided under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act may be used for specified reasons (see Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness). Employees not eligible for this leave may use their available annual and sick leave pursuant to Policy 825 Leave. Employees who exhaust all leave options may be allowed to take unpaid leave. Pursuant to Policy 825 Leave, Section V. Leave of Absence, employees may be allowed to be in a leave without pay status due to reasons of illness, injury, or disability for up to one year. Appropriate medical documentation will be required to approve such requests. This phase is consistent with the Tennessee Governor’s Executive Order 30 and the Tennessee Pledge (Higher Education).

- **Phase 2 – Increasing On-Campus Services and Campus Employee Footprint (Gradual implementation, by division, beginning July 14, 2020):** Supervisors will work with the Provost and division vice presidents to increase on-campus services and campus employee footprint. In appropriate circumstances, employees will continue to work remotely or in hybrid work arrangements following the process in Policy 813 Alternate Work Arrangements. Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Extended Family Medical Leave as provided under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act may be used for specified reasons (see Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness). Employees not eligible for this leave may use their available annual and sick leave pursuant to Policy 825 Leave. Employees who exhaust all leave options may be allowed to take unpaid leave. Pursuant to Policy 825 Leave, Section V. Leave of Absence, employees may be allowed to be in a leave without pay status due to reasons of illness, injury, or disability for up to one year. Appropriate medical documentation will be required to approve such requests.
Phase 3 – Full Services/Campus Fully Occupied (Timing to be determined): This includes the resumption of on-campus instruction as prescribed, full services as required, and moving toward full operations. This phase will be informed by guidance from health professionals and in compliance with guidelines and directives of Federal and State governing agencies.

The movement between these phases is dependent on the outcomes seen as restrictions are lifted. If outbreak numbers begin to increase and/or peak, it may be necessary to adjust these phases until the situation is under control.

The four primary objectives and three phases of reopening require health monitoring, social distancing, staffing and work schedule options, hygiene practices, administrative procedures, and technical innovation. Together they will ensure that the reopening is safe, efficient and in keeping with our True Blue spirit.
PHASE 1 GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES AND SUPERVISORS

Phase 1, which begins June 16, 2020, marks the incremental return-to-work for campus employees. As employees physically return to work, emphasis will be placed on protecting their health and welfare along with all members of the campus community to the extent possible.

Because the spread of COVID-19 is primarily person-to-person, the University community must fully engage in proactive measures. Supervisors will play a key role in promoting the success of the University’s plan as we move from phase to phase of reopening. The guidelines below provide the expectations and requirements of University employees and supervisors as employees return to work.

Facility managers and department heads will be responsible for managing the University’s social distancing guidelines along with other necessary social distancing criteria for access to their specific areas (i.e. James E. Walker Library; Campus Recreation; Student Union facilities; dining venues; athletic facilities, etc.). Consistency should be a goal, but may not always be possible.

All campus departments must look for ways to continue to provide high-quality student support services, both remotely (for those who cannot come to campus) and in-person (while maintaining appropriate health safety standards).

The University will establish enhanced standards for cleaning and disinfecting the campus, as well as provide sufficient staff and supplies to maintain these standards.

Expectations and Requirements of Employees

Because the health and safety of the campus community is of paramount concern, all employees are required to comply with the following expectations and requirements. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

1. Before returning back to campus all employees must complete the online Return to Work Agreement through PipelineMT. Employees are certifying that they will abide by the following:
   - Follow all expectations/requirements before returning to work;
   - Complete a self-assessment prior to coming to work each day;
   - Read Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness, as well as, Charting our Course for a Safe Return to Campus.

Employees are strongly encouraged to complete online training before returning to work. This training will be provided to employees by email through the University’s training software vendor.
2. Employees are required to monitor personal health daily and participate in appropriate health screening procedures. On a daily basis before reporting to work, employees are required to self-assess and monitor their health by asking the following questions:

   a. Have I been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?

   b. Do I have any of the symptoms listed below that are unrelated to any other condition (such as allergies)

      - Fever over 100.4 degrees F;
      - Chills;
      - Cough;
      - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing;
      - Fatigue
      - Muscle or body aches;
      - Headache;
      - Sore throat;
      - New loss of taste or smell;
      - Congestion or runny nose;
      - Nausea or vomiting;
      - Diarrhea;
      - Other symptoms as updated by the CDC.

   If the employee is experiencing any of these symptoms and they are unrelated to any other condition (such as allergies) or if the employee has been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case, the employee is required to stay home; limit contact with others; contact their health care provider or seek other appropriate medical assistance as necessary; and report work/leave status to their supervisor.

   If these symptoms are confirmed at work or develop while at work, employees are required to leave the premises immediately; limit contact with others; contact their health care provider or seek other appropriate medical assistance as necessary; and report their work/leave status to their supervisor along with information regarding contacts with others and areas visited on campus when symptoms began.

3. Confirming health and providing appropriate screening information upon arrival at work as required by your supervisor;

4. Participating in health screening confirmation procedures, such as temperature taking, as required by your supervisor;
5. Employees with concerns related to their return to campus should contact the appropriate office under the circumstances as specified below:

a. ADA Compliance Office
   Lance Alexis, Director
   lance.alexis@mtsu.edu
   615.898.2185
   Contact this office concerning an employee’s medical condition that might impact the employee’s return to campus including being in a CDC-identified high-risk category for COVID-19.

b. Office of Human Resources
   Kathy Musselman, Assistant Vice President
   kathy.musselman@mtsu.edu
   615.898.2929
   Contact this office:
   i. For an employee’s non-medical condition that might impact the employee’s return to campus; or,
   ii. If the employee’s circumstances would allow them to benefit from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, either with Emergency Paid Sick Leave or Extended Family and Medical Leave. For more details about these programs, see Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness. Employees must follow return-to-work protocols and requirements; these will be provided to them by the Human Resources Office. Employees are not to return to work until they are cleared to do so by that office.

6. Employees are required to follow personal hygiene and protective measures, including but not limited to:

   - Washing hands often;
   - Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth;
   - Coughing or sneezing into your face mask or elbow;
   - Using PPE appropriately;
   - Cleaning and disinfecting work areas appropriately.

7. Employees are required to wear face coverings or masks inside any campus building. This applies to all areas of campus and includes but is not limited to, classrooms, labs, offices, and common areas such as hallways, stairways, elevators, restrooms and other shared spaces. Face coverings or masks are not required in private office when one person occupies that office. They are also not required outdoors when social distancing is practiced.
8. Employees are required to practice social distancing:
   - Maintain six feet from others as work duties permit;
   - Avoid gathering in groups for non-work activities;
   - Adhere to posted occupancy limits for spaces;
   - Avoid traveling in the same vehicle.

Expectations and Requirements of Departments and Supervisors

1. Supervisors will communicate the requirements of the online health screening certification process Return to Work agreement and online training to employees. Supervisors will be responsible for ensuring that all employees have completed the online process and training before returning to work.

Employees must complete the online process prior to returning to work certifying:
   - They will follow all expectations/requirements before returning to work;
   - They will complete a self-assessment prior to coming to work each day;
   - They have read Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness, as well as, Charting our Course for a Safe Return to Campus.

2. Supervisors will implement the University’s mandated safe-at-work strategies that are tailored to specific operations. These tailored strategies should include:
   - Face-covering protocols for employees;
   - Ensuring adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies by following purchasing procedures and supply management guidance from the Division of Business and Finance. These supplies include but are not limited to:
     - Face coverings;
     - Hand sanitizer;
     - Local cleaning/disinfecting products;
     - Departmental, non-touch thermometers.

3. Supervisors will develop and implement administrative controls to include:
   - Social distancing practices;
   - Continuation of video conferencing in place of in-person meetings;
   - Adjustments to physical office layouts;
   - Alternative travel arrangements (limited occupancy in University vehicles).
4. Supervisors will direct employees who have concerns related to returning to campus to the appropriate office as set out above in the Expectation and Requirements of Employees section of this document.

5. Supervisors will identify safety enhancements for areas with considerable person-to-person interactions (e.g., reception areas, advising, etc.). These enhancements could include but are not limited to:
   - Protective barriers;
   - Six-foot spacing designation signage;
   - Additional signage (e.g., capacity, distancing, awareness) as required.
     - Facilities Services and Campus Planning are providing input to Printing Services (Blue Print Solutions) on occupancy limits for public elevators and restrooms only.
     - General signage for hygiene, social distancing, etc., will be prepared by Blue Print Solutions and provided by the University.
     - The design and content of University-purchased signs will be consistent throughout campus in order to provide visual cues for community members and spark appropriate responses.
     - Supervisors should order tailored signage necessary for specific operations through Blue Print Solutions.

6. Supervisors, working with the Provost or their respective Vice President, should consider adapting or altering operations to provide greater safety to the community. This includes, but is not limited to:
   - Allowing employees to continue working remotely or in hybrid work arrangements in appropriate circumstances following the process in Policy 813 Alternate Work Arrangement;
   - Evaluating whether changes in layout and design to create natural separation should take place;
   - Requiring visitors to their offices to make appointments to prevent gathering in waiting or reception areas.
   - Identifying and digitizing paper processes where possible and practical;
   - Using video- or audio-conference technology to limit gatherings;

8. Supervisors may screen or confirm daily self-assessment for all employees upon arrival to work within their department. All employees in the department should be subject to the same protocols.

9. Supervisors may take employee temperatures upon arrival to work with no touch thermometers provided by the University. All employees in the department should be subject to the same protocols.

10. When employees notify their supervisors that they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, if the employee has not reported to work the supervisor will direct the employee to stay home. If the employee is already at work, the supervisor will direct the employee to immediately leave the premises. In all cases, the employee should be directed to seek appropriate medical care. We are in the process of developing an online portal for supervisors to immediately report symptomatic and positive cases. In the interim, please report these cases to Health Services using the following link:

   https://www.mtsu.edu/covidreporting

11. Supervisors should not allow employees to return to work until they are notified by the Human Resources Office that the employee is cleared to return.

**Routine and Increased Cleaning/Disinfecting**

It is currently known that the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets. Transmission occurs most frequently among those interacting within about six feet of an infected person. Current evidence suggests that COVID-19 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. Cleaning of visibly dirty and high touch surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for preventing COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses.

To limit transmission of the novel coronavirus, MTSU is providing the following guidance for cleaning and disinfecting rooms or areas of facilities on campus where those with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 have visited.

This guidance is based on the following U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention documents: Interim Recommendations for U.S. Households with Suspected/Confirmed
Definitions of terms in this section:

- **Community facilities**: Most non-healthcare settings visited by the public outside of a household.
- **Cleaning**: Removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs, but removing them lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.
- **Disinfecting**: Using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but killing germs on a surface *after* cleaning can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

The appropriate custodial services department (Facilities Services, Housing, Dining Services, etc.) will clean campus buildings on a daily or routine basis including enhanced standards for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces and high-traffic areas. For public spaces, restrooms, and elevators, this includes but is not limited to:

- Door knobs
- Handles
- Push buttons
- Toilets, faucets and sinks

Cleaning and disinfecting products may be obtained through Facilities Services to allow departments to provide intermittent disinfecting beyond the routine cleaning and disinfecting for individual working areas as needed. Individual work areas may include, but are not limited to:

- Tables;
- Countertops;
- Handles;
- Desks;
- Phones;
- Keyboards;
- Touch screens;
- And other frequently used equipment.

**Cleaning and Disinfecting Facilities After Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 cases**

If a person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 is known to have been in a facility, cleaning and disinfecting of the facility, area, or space is required. Supervisors should immediately close off the affected area awaiting the scheduled cleaning and disinfecting. In addition, report this
information through the online portal provided above. Facilities Services, working with Health Services, will schedule the cleaning and disinfecting, as well as identify the appropriate safety procedures associated with the affected areas.

In addition to cleaning and disinfecting protocols, current guidance addresses safety measures such as room/space isolation, schedule for cleaning activities, and room/space ventilation. The University will follow measures specified in this guidance for all facilities, both residential and non-residential.
GOING BEYOND PHASE 1

The University’s goal is to ramp up on-campus operations by the start of the Fall 2020 semester as permitted by guidance from state and federal health agencies and other officials.

The target dates for the beginning and completion of Phase 3 have yet to be determined. They will incorporate the practices put into place in Phases 1 and 2.

The Provost and division vice presidents, upon approval by the President, will tailor Phase 3 implementation for their operations, based upon the health and safety of the University community and the needs of the institution.
I am TRUE BLUE. 
as a member of this diverse community,

I am a VALUABLE CONTRIBUTOR to its

& PROGRESS & SUCCESS & I AM ENGAGED IN THE LIFE

of this community

I am a RECIPIENT & a GIVER

I AM A listener & a speaker

I am HONEST in word and deed

I AM COMMITTED TO REASON, NOT VIOLENCE

I am a learner NOW & FOREVER TRUE BLUE.

I am a BLUE RAIDER.