

H1N1 Frequently Asked Questions

Iowa State University Human Resources

General Guidelines

1. Where can I find the latest information about Influenza A (H1N1) and the situation at Iowa State University?

Iowa State University; <http://www.news.iastate.edu/sites/flu/>

2. What are the symptoms of Influenza A (H1N1)?

Influenza A (H1N1) symptoms include:

- Fever (greater than 100 degrees), chills
- Sore throat, headache, cough
- Body aches, fatigue
- Possible diarrhea and vomiting

If you do not have a fever greater than 100 degrees and a cough and/or sore throat, you may not have the flu. To protect yourself and others, you should practice good hygiene, including frequent hand washing, covering your nose and mouth with your sleeve if you cough or sneeze, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands.

3. What should I do if I develop influenza symptoms?

To limit the potential for exposure to other people, if you have a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit and a cough, **do not** come to work. Take the following actions:

- Notify your supervisor that you are ill and will not be able to work
- Isolate yourself to keep from potentially exposing other people
- Seek medical advice from your primary care physician

If you have severe symptoms, the CDC urge medical care right away if the person:

- Has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- Is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- Has signs of dehydration (dizziness; absence of urination; or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry)
- Has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions)
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused.

You should follow the appropriate departmental protocol for reporting off work.

4. When can I return to work if I have had Influenza A (H1N1) or other flu symptoms?

Currently, the CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

5. What should I do if I encounter someone who is obviously sick?

As with other forms of the flu or contagious illnesses such as colds, maintaining a reasonable distance from the person is a starting point. Do not shake hands or make other physical contact. Offer the individual a tissue and ask the person to cover their mouth and nose if they should need to cough or sneeze. Use a sanitary wipe after the person has left to wipe those areas of your work station that the person has touched. There may be situations in which a meeting can be rescheduled to a time when the person is feeling better or the business can be conducted by phone or e-mail. Do not hesitate to offer this suggestion if it is appropriate. If you believe a staff member is ill and should not be working and they have not informed their supervisor you should do so in order to reduce the risk to others in the workplace.

6. Could the university close as a result of a communicable disease outbreak?

At this time health authorities do not see a likely need to close. We will monitor federal and state guidance closely and will provide more information if circumstances take a serious turn for the worst.

Employee FAQ

1. My child's school/day care is closed due to an incident of Influenza A (H1N1), and my child is not sick. I have no other child care arrangements. Can I bring the child to work with me?

Bringing a child to work under these circumstances is not recommended or advisable—and in many work areas it may be prohibited. Decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the dean or department chair/director. Paid or unpaid leave may be available if you must stay home with your child. [Protection of Children in the Workplace Policy](#)

2. Can my manager or supervisor make a temporary change to my job assignments so that my department/unit can continue the primary (essential) functions during a communicable disease outbreak?

Yes, the University has the right to temporarily reassign employees to work outside their usual classifications/responsibilities to the extent they are qualified and can safely perform the work. This includes employees with the necessary skills that are needed to work outside their colleges/divisions. Depending on the circumstances presented, the University will notify these employees that they are designated as performing essential functions and when and where they must report to work.

3. Can my supervisor make a temporary change to my assigned shift and/or assigned work schedule during a communicable disease outbreak?

Yes. The University has the right to temporarily adjust employees' work schedules to meet operational demands. This adjustment may be made on a case-by-case basis depending upon operational considerations.

4. Can I work from home in order to continue operations?

Employees wanting to work from home should contact their supervisor and receive authorization before working from home. Managers have the right to approve or disapprove an employee's request. Working from home may not be applicable in all circumstances due to the nature of the job or the equipment required to work.

5. Can my manager require me to work or remain at work during a public health emergency?

Your supervisor retains the right to schedule work and assign duties to employees. If an employee is unable to report to work as scheduled due to illness or injury, the supervisor should follow the standard departmental procedure regarding medical documentation (sick leave, FMLA).

A healthy employee may ask to leave work early or stay home. The supervisor can determine if this request can be accommodated based on unit needs. If a staff member is directed to report to or remain at work, is otherwise safely able to report to or remain at work, and refuses the directive of a proper authority to report to or remain at work, then normal corrective action procedures may be followed as appropriate either immediately or once the emergent situation has stabilized, and upon consultation with Employee & Labor Relations.

6. What types of leave are available during this time?

The following options are available depending upon the nature of the job responsibilities and the extent of the illness (not all options will be available in all situations):

- Use accrued paid leave (vacation (annual leave), sick, emergency)
- Use compensatory time (does not apply to Faculty and P&S staff)
- Make up the work during the same workweek with supervisory approval
- Request to work a different schedule with supervisory approval
- Work from home with supervisory approval
- Request leave without pay

Normal leave policies will be applied until and unless a decision to change them for the emergency event is made by the proper authority and communicated to campus. Any changes to normal paid leave practices made by the proper authorities during an emergency event will be communicated to faculty, staff and students by the University.

7. What would happen to my pay if I have no sick leave or vacation (annual) leave available and need to be off work?

Unpaid leave may be requested and granted consistent with policies and/or the collective bargaining agreement for the respective employee group.

Any changes to normal paid leave practices made by the proper authorities during an emergency event and will be communicated to faculty, staff, and students by the University.

8. Currently, I have been asked to bring in a physician's note for each absence related to illness. Will this expectation remain, given that this may not be practical in the event of a communicable disease outbreak (physician care not available, healthy employees choosing to stay home to avoid possible infection)?

Departments will be expected to maintain their existing expectations related to absences during a communicable disease situation. Employees will continue to be responsible for complying with their department's established work schedule and existing absence reporting policy. If due to circumstances outside of the employee's control, s/he is unable to comply with departmental policy, your supervisor will evaluate the situation on a case-by-case basis.

In the event that a healthy employee wishes to stay at home to avoid exposure, s/he is still expected to comply with the existing departmental policy. The employee acts in accordance with existing procedure by requesting time off from his/her supervisor. To be considered an authorized absence, the time off must be approved by the supervisor in advance. Approval of vacation (annual leave) will be at supervisor discretion in order to meet operational needs.

9. Can I be sent home if I am sick? Only for flu-related illnesses? What if I don't think I have the flu?

Yes, employees may be sent home if they are sick. Of greatest concern is an employee with a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit and a cough; this employee is likely to be sent home. Other symptoms (coughing, sneezing) may also be of concern; the decision to send an employee home who is exhibiting these symptoms should be made on a case-by-case basis.

In addition, employees are encouraged to practice basic preventative measures (practice good hygiene, including frequent hand washing, covering your nose and mouth with your sleeve if you cough or sneeze, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands) and post flu flyers throughout your work areas.

The University is required to maintain a safe and healthy environment, and has broad discretion over when and where an employee is to work.

With respect to determining whether someone has the flu, managers will follow the appropriate guidelines from the CDC. [CDC Guidelines](#)

10. Can my approved vacation (annual leave) request be canceled?

Yes, your supervisor may reconsider the approved vacation (annual leave) request based on operational needs. Supervisors of AFSCME staff should follow the collective bargaining agreement.

11. Will personal protective equipment (PPE) such as respirators, facemasks, and gloves be offered in the event of an H1N1 outbreak?

Employees should contact their managers regarding the need for and availability of PPE.

12. Does FMLA apply if I contract Influenza A (H1N1)? Does FMLA apply if my spouse, child or parent contracts Influenza A (H1N1), and I must stay home to care for him/her?

If the following criteria are met and you meet the eligibility criteria for FMLA (you have worked 12 months for the university and have worked 1,250 hours in the preceding 12 months), FMLA will apply:

- A period of incapacity of more than three consecutive, full calendar days **and**
 1. Two in-person visits to a health care provider; the first visit within 7 days of the first day of incapacity and the second visit within 30 days of the first day of incapacity **or**
 2. One in-person visit to a health care provider within 7 days of the first day of incapacity and subsequent treatment that includes prescription medication
- Inpatient care through an overnight stay in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical facility.

FMLA information and resources are available at: <http://policy.iastate.edu/policy/leave/fmla/> Contracting H1N1 could also impact other health conditions that might be covered by FMLA as well.

13. If I have met the above criteria for FMLA and must stay home because I have contracted Influenza A (H1N1) (or my spouse, child or parent has contracted Influenza A (H1N1), and I must stay home to care for him/her), how will I be paid?

Depending on the situation, accrued vacation, sick, emergency or compensatory leave will run concurrently with FMLA leave as applicable. FMLA leave itself is not paid, so unpaid leave may be necessary if you do not have accrued paid leave.

14. How do I submit a request for FMLA?

A request can be sent to fmla@iastate.edu or delivered to Employee and Labor Relations. Please include your supervisor's name and the reason for your request, i.e. your own serious health condition, birth of child, care for spouse, child and/or parent. Your request will be responded to in a reasonable manner and amount of time depending on the resources and workforce available.

Contact Information for FMLA Questions

Employee and Labor Relations Office

Phone: (515) 294-3753

Email: fmla@iastate.edu

Fax: (515) 294-1702

Supervisor FAQ

1. As manager or supervisor, can I make a temporary change to employees' job assignments so that my department/unit can continue our primary (essential) functions during communicable disease outbreak?

Yes, the University has the right to temporarily reassign employees to work outside their usual classifications/responsibilities to the extent they are qualified and can safely perform the work. This includes employees with the necessary skills that are needed to work outside their colleges/divisions. Depending on the circumstances presented, the University will notify these employees that they are designated as performing essential functions and when and where they must report to work.

2. Can I make a temporary change to an employees' assigned shift and/or assigned work schedule during a communicable disease outbreak?

Yes. The University has the right to temporarily adjust employees' work schedules to meet operational demands. This adjustment may be made on a case-by-case basis depending upon operational considerations. However, the ability to do so may be limited by a collective bargaining agreement; you should consult the AFSCME contract if applicable and/or contact Employee & Labor Relations.

3. My unit is heavily impacted by absenteeism and I think I need to close my unit, what should I do?

The University will follow federal and/or state guidance regarding the necessity to close the University. Should individual departments or units need to close, you should contact your divisional vice president for approval.

4. If I have to close or postpone our departmental business because of a communicable disease outbreak, can I send employees home?

Upon approval to close your unit/division from your divisional vice president, you may send employees home.

5. Can I allow employees to telecommute or work alternate work schedules in order to continue operations?

Yes. In reviewing your staffing situation, allowing your employees to telecommute may be a viable option during this critical period. However, this may not be applicable in all circumstances due to the nature of the job or the equipment required to work. You should document any arrangements to telecommute in writing. Please consult with Employee & Labor Relations. [Telecommuting Frequently Asked Questions for Supervisors](#)

6. Are there issues I need to consider regarding employees working at home?

Yes. Managers may consider allowing alternate work arrangements including working at home by assessing their business priorities. In fact, it may be prudent for the department and the employee to work together to find ways to enable employees to perform their job functions while away from the central work location.

Employee & Labor Relations may assist the manager in evaluation the issues when considering approving alternate work arrangements. Managers should authorize the employee in writing (email) to work remotely.

Additionally, you should consider the telecommuter's at-home work area is an extension of his/her office work space. Injuries occurring in the work place during work hours are covered under Worker's Compensation, just as an injury would be if it occurred at the central work location. The telecommuter should be instructed to notify you immediately. You should complete the First Report of Injury form immediately.

An additional consideration is how the employee will record their hours worked from home.

7. What right does a supervisor have to require that an employee report to work or remain at work during a public health emergency?

A supervisor retains the right to schedule work and assign duties to employees. If an employee is unable to report to work as scheduled due to illness or injury, the supervisor should follow the standard departmental procedure regarding medical documentation (sick leave, FMLA). Please consult with Employee & Labor Relations should you require further clarification.

A healthy employee may ask to leave work early or stay home. The supervisor can determine if this request can be accommodated based on unit needs. If a staff member is directed to report to or remain at work, is otherwise safely able to report to or remain at work, and refuses the directive of a proper authority to report to or remain at work, normal corrective action procedures should be followed as appropriate either immediately or once the emergent situation has stabilized, and upon consultation with Employee & Labor Relations.

8. What types of leave are available for employees to use during this time?

The following options are available although not all options will be available in all situations depending upon the nature of the job responsibilities and the extent of the illness:

- Use accrued paid leave (vacation (annual leave), sick, emergency)
- Use compensatory time (does not apply to Faculty and P&S staff)
- Make up the work during the same workweek with supervisory approval
- May request to work a different schedule with supervisory approval
- Work from home with supervisory approval
- Request leave without pay

Timely processing of unpaid leaves is critical. Normal leave policies will be applied until and unless a decision to change them for the emergency event is made by the proper authority and communicated to campus. Any changes to normal paid leave practices made by the proper authorities during an emergency event will be communicated to faculty, staff and students by the University.

9. If units are shut down, but some positions (tasks) need to be filled, and there are more available employees than open positions, how do we prioritize who is permitted to work?

We cannot answer this question definitively. An important component of each department's pandemic preparedness planning process is to identify its essential functions in the event of staff absences, as well as a succession of persons to whom overall authority would be designated in the event of illness (es). In addition, the collective bargaining agreement has a provision regarding temporary layoff that will need to be evaluated.

In the event of a health emergency, your supervisor has the right to schedule work and assign work duties to employees while balancing operational needs. Managers have the discretion to reassign an employee's job duties as deemed necessary to the extent they are qualified and can safely perform the work, and to explore alternate arrangements in order to ensure that essential operations continue.

10. What would happen to employees' pay if they have no sick leave or vacation leave available?

Unpaid leave may be requested and granted consistent with policies and/or the collective bargaining agreement for the respective employee group.

Otherwise, any changes to normal paid leave practices made by the proper authorities during an emergency event will be communicated to faculty, staff, and students by the University.

11. Can I tell employees about our department's preparations for operating during a communicable disease outbreak?

Yes. Employees should know what to expect before a public health emergency occurs. In those departments that expect to remain operational, employees need to know what role they will play. Therefore it is prudent planning to include your employees in the development of contingency plans and inform them of the communications plan.

12. Do we have the obligation to notify the unions prior to implementing the unit's contingency plan?

The majority of the decisions you will make are well within ISU's right to manage the workplace under a collective bargaining agreement. We recommend that you do not delay implementation, thereby not impeding continued operations. However, we suggest that you advise Employee & Labor Relations as these changes are implemented; we will notify the union as necessary.

13. Currently, I require some employees to bring in a physician's statement for each absence related to illness. Will this expectation remain, given that this may not be practical in the event of a communicable disease outbreak (physician care not available, healthy employees choosing to stay home to avoid possible infection)?

Departments will be expected to maintain their existing expectations related to absences during a communicable disease outbreak situation. Employees will continue to be responsible for complying with their department's established work schedule and existing absence reporting policy. If due to circumstances outside of the employee's control, s/he is unable to comply with departmental policy, you should evaluate the situation on a case-by-case basis.

In the event that a healthy employee wishes to stay at home to avoid exposure, s/he is still expected to comply with the existing departmental policy. The employee acts in accordance with existing procedure by requesting time off from his/her supervisor. To be consider an authorized absence, the time off must be approved by the supervisor in advance. Approval of vacation (annual leave) will be at supervisor discretion in order to meet operational needs.

14. Can we send people home if they are sick? Only for flu-related illnesses? How will we determine whether people have the flu?

Yes, employees may be sent home if they are sick. Of greatest concern is an employee with a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit and a cough; this employee should definitely be sent home. Other symptoms (coughing, sneezing) may also be of concern; the decision to send an employee home who is exhibiting these symptoms is to be made on a case-by-case basis.

In addition, advise employees of the basic preventative measures (practice good hygiene, including frequent hand washing, covering your nose and mouth with your sleeve if you cough or sneeze, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands) and post flu flyers throughout your work areas.

The University is required to maintain a safe and healthy environment, and has broad discretion over when and where an employee is to work.

With respect to determining whether someone has the flu, managers will follow the appropriate guidelines from the CDC. [CDC Guidelines](#)

15. Can we ask people if their symptoms are consistent with those of the H1N1 virus?

Yes. The information received is considered to be confidential and is to be used in support of the individual's health and related employment needs.

16. If a staff member is sent home, what options are available to stay in "paid" status?

The staff member must use applicable leave time should it be available or, in the case of merit and collective bargaining employees, and depending on the illness and the job responsibilities, they may make up the work in the same workweek. Otherwise, they should be in a leave without pay status.

17. Can I cancel an approved vacation (annual leave) request?

Yes, the supervisor may to reconsider the approved vacation (annual leave) request based on operational needs. For AFSCME staff, supervisors should review Article IX, Section 11, for specific procedures.

18. An employee informed me that his/her child's school/day care is closed due to an incident of Influenza A (H1N1), and the child is not sick. The employee has no other child care arrangements. Can the employee bring the child to work?

Bringing a child to work under these circumstances is not recommended or advisable—and in many work areas it may be prohibited. Decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the dean or department head. Paid or unpaid leave may be available if the employee must stay home. [Protection of Children in the Workplace Policy](#)

19. Does FMLA apply if an employee contracts Influenza A (H1N1)? Does FMLA apply if the spouse, child or parent contracts Influenza A (H1N1), and the employee must stay home to care for him/her?

If the following criteria are met and the employee meets the eligibility criteria for FMLA (the employee has worked 12 months for the university and has worked 1,250 hours in the preceding 12 months), FMLA will apply:

- A period of incapacity of more than three consecutive, full calendar days **and**
 1. Two in-person visits to a health care provider; the first visit within 7 days of the first day of incapacity and the second visit within 30 days of the first day of incapacity **or**
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- Inpatient care through an overnight stay in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical.

FMLA information and resources are available at: <http://policy.iastate.edu/policy/leave/fmla/> Contracting H1N1 could also impact other health conditions that might be covered by FMLA as well.

20. Will personal protective equipment (PPE) such as respirators, facemasks, and gloves be offered in the event of an H1N1 outbreak?

Managers should work through their divisional vice presidents regarding PPE.

This document is a working document based upon current policies. It may be revised as new information becomes available related to operations during a disaster or pandemic, or based on further direction we may receive from University leadership, the Board of Regents, the State of Iowa and/or other civil authorities. You should familiarize yourself with this and other disaster-related materials in order to be optimally prepared in the event of a disaster or pandemic.