

**From:** [all\\_emcc](#) on behalf of [Scott Alsobrooks](#)  
**To:** [all\\_emcc](#)  
**Subject:** [All\_emcc] COVID-19 Update  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 10, 2020 10:59:15 AM  
**Attachments:** [Mayfield COVID-19 Letter.pdf](#)  
[ATT00001.txt](#)

---

Dear Colleagues:

As you are aware, the coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued to spread worldwide with new cases confirmed in several parts of the United States. In response to the United States Department of Education [letter](#) issued on March 5, 2020, that provides guidance to institutions regarding interruptions of study related to COVID-19, we have coordinated with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Mississippi Community College Board to create a preliminary plan should the virus progress to our area. Please note that this is an evolving plan that we will continue to refine as more information becomes available.

In accordance with guidance provided by the above-mentioned agencies, should the need arise for us to close all locations, we will shift to online delivery of instruction. We are asking all faculty to begin planning in the event that we need to shift to virtual instruction. We understand this shift could create difficulty, particularly for our career-technical programs that require access to specialized equipment. Our senior leadership and instructional team are currently thinking through potential scenarios to best serve this population of students. Additionally, if the advice of Public Health is that we close campus to stem the spread of the disease, we will need to plan to cancel all college events such as the CTE Open House, Priority Registration, etc.

We are currently in the planning phase, additional and more specific guidance will be provided as the situation progresses. In the meantime, I am attaching a letter from Dr. Andrea Mayfield regarding what institutions can do NOW to prevent or slow down the spread of the virus. We are following these disease prevention guidelines currently and will ramp up our efforts when we return from spring break.

Our goal is to keep members of our community as safe as possible, while also ensuring our students can complete their coursework for the semester. Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we navigate this evolving and complex situation with COVID-19.

Scott Alsobrooks, Ph.D.  
President  
East Mississippi Community College

**From:** Andrea Scott Mayfield  
**Date:** March 9, 2020 at 9:36:15 PM CDT  
**To:** staff , [Presidents](#)  
**Subject:** Department of Health Update-COVID-19

Dear Colleagues:

As you are aware, the coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued the spread worldwide and is now being found in several parts of the U.S.

Employers throughout MS, including state government offices, need to prepare for the possibility that this virus may be in our communities soon.

Within the Mississippi State Employee Handbook (page 20 - see below), there is guidance for employees in the event of an influenza pandemic. The elements of this guidance are appropriate for many forms of viral respiratory illness, including COVID-19; although there will likely be adjustments in guidance based on the specifics of COVID-19.

**Please note – additional and more specific guidance will be provided in the near future.**

A call center at the Mississippi State Department of Health is now available for the general public at **1 877 978-6453** to answer questions about COVID-19 questions.

### **Mississippi State Employee Handbook**

#### **3.3 INFLUENZA PANDEMIC POLICY**

*Preventing the Spread of the Flu in the Workplace State employees are encouraged to cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of both seasonal and novel strains of influenza in the workplace. The best strategy for reducing the transmission of the flu is frequent hand washing with warm, soapy water, covering mouths with tissues whenever you sneeze, discarding tissues used when sneezing. Agencies are also encouraged to install alcohol-based hand sanitizers throughout the workplace and in common areas.*

*Staying Home When Ill Many times, with the best of intentions, employees report to work even though they feel ill. State employees are provided with paid medical leave to compensate employees who are unable to work due to illness. During flu season and/or an influenza pandemic, it is critical that employees do not report to work while they are ill and/or experiencing the following symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F or 37.8 degrees C) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Employees who report to work ill will be sent home in accordance with these health guidelines. Employees who are sent home under this policy will be required to utilize leave in accordance with Section 3.2 Leave.*

*Reporting to Work When Not Ill An influenza pandemic could result in a significant level of absenteeism. State employees may be unable to work if they become ill due to the virus while others may need to remain home to care for ill family members or simply to provide care for children during school closings. During this time, unless otherwise notified, attendance and leave policies will remain in place. Individuals who believe they may face particular challenges reporting to work during a severe influenza pandemic should take steps to develop any necessary contingency plans.*

## **COVID-19 Basics:**

- The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) causes a febrile respiratory syndrome, similar to influenza.
- Many cases may have mild symptoms.
- Severe cases may occur, leading to respiratory failure and death, especially among older adults and those with chronic medical conditions.
- The vast majority of people infected with COVID-19 will fully recover.
- The virus is spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets.
- There is no antiviral treatment or vaccine currently available for COVID-19.

Please review the essential elements of CDC guidance for preventing the spread of illness in the workplace. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html> (See below).

## **CDC Recommended Strategies for Employers to Use Now:**

- **Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:**
  - Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
  - Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
  - Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
  - Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
  - Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.
- **Separate sick employees:**
  - CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).
- **Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:**
  - Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
  - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
  - Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.

- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.
- Visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information.
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning:**
  - Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
  - No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
  - Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- **Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:**
  - Check the [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from China, and information for aircrew, can be found at on the [CDC website](#).
  - Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of [acute respiratory illness](#) before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
  - Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
  - If outside the United States, sick employees should follow your company's policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

## **Mississippi State Employee Handbook**

### **3.3 INFLUENZA PANDEMIC POLICY**

*Preventing the Spread of the Flu in the Workplace State employees are encouraged to cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of both seasonal and novel strains of influenza in the workplace. The best strategy for reducing the transmission of the flu is frequent hand washing with warm, soapy water, covering mouths with tissues whenever you sneeze, discarding tissues used when sneezing. Agencies are also encouraged to install alcohol-based hand sanitizers throughout the workplace and in common areas.*

*Staying Home When Ill Many times, with the best of intentions, employees report to work even though they feel ill. State employees are provided with paid medical leave to compensate employees who are unable to work due to illness. During flu season and/or an influenza pandemic, it is critical that employees do not report to work while they are ill and/or experiencing the following symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F or 37.8 degrees C) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Employees who report to work ill will be sent home in accordance with these health guidelines. Employees who are sent home under this policy will be required to utilize leave in accordance with Section 3.2 Leave.*

*Reporting to Work When Not Ill An influenza pandemic could result in a significant level of absenteeism. State employees may be unable to work if they become ill due to the virus while others may need to remain home to care for ill family members or simply to provide care for children during school closings. During this time, unless otherwise notified, attendance and leave policies will remain in place. Individuals who believe they may face particular challenges reporting to work during a severe influenza pandemic should take steps to develop any necessary contingency plans.*

Andrea Mayfield, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
**Mississippi Community College Board**  
3825 Ridgewood Road  
Jackson, MS 39211