

COVID-19 Operation Plan for the NDFS Department (revised July 30, 2020)

This plan was modified from the [model operational plan](#) provide on the USU COVID-19 website. Each faculty member involved in departmental research or outreach, including Extension programs and food production facilities, will submit to the Department Head a COVID SOP for each research lab, other departmental facilities or activities under their supervision. SOPs will be reviewed and approved by the Department Head or other appropriate entities such as Extension. A file of approved SOPs will be archived and maintained by the Department Head. The faculty member will disseminate specific SOPs to all those under their direct supervision.

Work Schedules for Department Employees*

1. NDFS will continue to encourage telework for our department, especially for employees who are high-risk or caring for someone who is high-risk.
2. Supervisors and employees will coordinate schedules to avoid workspace conflicts for space.
3. Employees with their own office may return to work on site and during their regular work hours. Signs indicating visitors should “knock and enter when invited” will be placed outside of office doors.
4. For employee teams who work in shared offices or workspaces including labs, social distancing and the wearing of face masks will be required. To accomplish this, individuals must remain 6 feet apart and sit diagonal, not adjacent, to each other.
5. Supervisors should ensure that any employee stays home or is sent home when they are exhibiting any symptom of COVID-19 as outlined in the USU [COVID-19 guidelines](#). These symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches and pains, decreased sense of smell, and sore throat. USU has several COVID-19 paid leave options for employees outlined in a [temporary policy](#). These temporary policies for paid leave are designed to encourage employees stay home when they are ill in order to protect others. COVID-19 paid leave is additive to and not a replacement of accrued annual leave or sick leave.

Employee Safety Guidelines for Onsite Work

1. All employees will follow [USU’s COVID-19 hygiene standards](#). This includes the wearing of a face covering, frequent handwashing and/or use of hand sanitizer, avoiding touch their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands, and covering coughs and sneezes.
2. Employees are expected to wear face coverings in accordance with [USU’s COVID-19 Face Covering policy](#). According to this temporary policy, face coverings should be worn when inside all university building, including in elevators, hallways, classrooms, and break rooms; in outdoor university spaces where social distancing is difficult; and in USU vehicles when riding with others.
3. The department will provide a face covering for each employee that requests one. Face coverings should be changed or laundered each day. Face coverings are not required when only one employee is in an office or conference room.

4. Meetings will be scheduled in spaces that facilitate social distancing and/or occur remotely using web-conferencing tools.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the mental health of employees. Please be kind to one another and help each other manage this difficult time. Resources to address mental health concerns can be found at the [USU COVID resource page](#).

Teaching

1. Instructors and students should follow the [safety guidelines](#) for teaching outlined by the Center for Innovative Design and Instruction.
2. Instructors should teach in a way consistent with the guidance provided by USU at the [USU Ready website](#) and [Keep Teaching](#).
3. All instructors should facilitate accommodations to students as directed by the DRC.

Research

1. Each PI or laboratory director will develop COVID-19 specific standard operating procedures (SOPs) for their research environment consistent with the [template and resources](#) provided by USU's VP for Research office.

Events, Programming, and Services

1. Meetings will continue to be held virtually where possible or with a hybrid of in-person and virtual attendees to ensure adequate social distancing in conference rooms.
2. Training will be provided virtually through the use of web conference services. Training may be provided in-person if the group is small enough to fit in the training space where social distancing, use of face coverings, and cleanliness can be maintained.
3. Appointments for department services will be held virtually or scheduled so that social distancing, use of face coverings, and cleanliness can be maintained.

Facility Protocols to Protect Employees, Students, and Visitors

1. USU-approved COVID-19 signage that lists COVID-19 symptoms will be posted at both entrances to the office, and other department common spaces such as the library, conference rooms, and restrooms.
2. Employees or visitors who are exhibiting symptoms will be instructed to return home and conduct business remotely.
3. Disinfectant will be available in the main office. Common areas and high touch surfaces in work areas such as telephones, door handles, light switches, copier buttons, conference room tables, drinking fountains, refrigerators, and microwaves will be cleaned frequently.

- a. Conference tables, door knobs, and light switches will be wiped down by the meeting host of the conference room or library at the conclusion of a meeting.
 - b. The office support staff (Randi Kendrick or Tara Black) will conduct a daily walk through and wipe down high-touch surfaces areas in the office, conference room, and library at least once per day.
 - c. Employees will wipe down their respective workstations daily.
4. Front desk staff will sit behind a plexiglass barrier to conduct business.
5. Front desk staff will wear a face covering when interacting with visitors. Until a plexiglass barrier is obtained for front desk, the public entrance will not be open to visitors.
6. The reception area and conference rooms will include hand sanitizer, tissues, and a no-touch trashcan.
7. Approved USU floor decals will be placed in the reception area to indicate where to stand and/or wait at an appropriate social distance.
8. Chairs will be removed and/or signage will be placed on reception area furniture to facilitate social distancing while guests wait.
9. The NDFS conference room (NDFS 211) will be limited to 5 people and the NDFS library (NDFS 214) will be limited to 4 people as designated to facilitate a social distance of 6 feet. Masks will be required at all times. The social distancing room capacity will be displayed on a sign outside the entry of each room. Extra chairs will be stacked in the rooms, or taped off, and a sign will indicate that they should not be used. Unless it creates a privacy, data security, or other security risk, internal doors will be propped open so handle use is not necessary and ventilation is increased.

Training and Communication Plan for Return to Onsite Operations

1. A copy of this plan will be emailed to department employees once approved.
2. Preparations for return to work and expectations will be discussed during faculty and staff meetings in July and August. Space will be reserved on the agenda to answer questions from employees.
3. Employees will be emailed the USU-approved screening questions to review before coming back to work on site. Employees who have recently been symptomatic or who become symptomatic will be instructed to work from home and seek medical treatment if the symptoms are of concern to the employee. For any of these symptoms, the state of Utah recommends testing for COVID-19: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle aches and chills, or decreased sense of smell or taste.
4. Before an employee returns to work, their supervisor must approve the date they will return to onsite work to ensure proper work arrangements including social distancing, wearing of face coverings, and proper hygiene activities.

5. Supervisors will monitor (using passive observation) their onsite employees for potential symptoms and will ask employees who exhibit symptoms to return home.
6. The department will post USU-approved signage setting expectations for staying home when sick, respiratory hygiene and etiquette, and workplace behavior.
7. Employees should monitor themselves regularly and should alert their direct supervisor and return home immediately if they experience any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19 including fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle aches and chills, or decreased sense of smell or taste.

Travel

1. For all travel, USU recommends limiting out-of-state travel, avoiding travel to high-risk locations, and [following CDC guidelines](#) when a person does travel. Please refer to the USU's [COVID-19 travel guidelines](#) for more information.
2. Employees may request travel authorizations for essential in-state-travel, such as to perform essential research or Extension activities.
 - a. TAs will be required for each trip so that the traveler and supervisor can consider risks associated with each specific place and activity.
 - b. When traveling by car, limit the number of people traveling together. Wear cloth face masks if more than one person must travel together in one vehicle.
 - c. Carry disinfectant solution, and disinfect the steering wheel, door handles, and other surfaces that you may touch in the vehicle before you enter and as you leave.
3. Travelers should discuss their plans to travel, whether for business or personal reasons, with the Department Head well in advanced of the planned travel so that the Department Head can consider the associated risks and identify a contingency plan if it is determined that a quarantine will be necessary upon the travelers return to USU.
4. Employees will check COVID-19 symptoms before and after travel for personal or business reason and will stay home if experiencing symptoms.
5. All travelers regardless of the nature or purpose of the trip, are asked to complete the USU [Travel Questionnaire](#) upon the completion of their trip.
6. Individuals returning from high risk areas, and international location, or who have potentially had contact with a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 may be required to work from home for at least 14 days.

* Employees include all full and part-time faculty and staff, as well as hourly employees including graduate and undergraduate students.