

Employee Absences During a Flu Outbreak



The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has recently issued guidance for responses to influenza for institutions of higher education during the 2009-2010 academic year. Adopting the guidance from the CDC, **SMU asks that all students, faculty, and staff with flu-like illness remain home until 24 hours after resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.** Symptoms of flu include fever or chills and cough or sore throat; symptoms can include runny nose, body aches, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. Please follow these guidelines:

- **Report sick leave** for the time period you are not at work due to symptoms or illness. If you do not have accrued sick leave, HR will work with you and your manager on a case-by-case basis; you should stay home if you have a flu-like illness and remain home until 24 hours after resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- **Pay for regular faculty and staff will not be impacted** by absence due to flu-like illnesses.
- You are **not required to present a doctor's note** to confirm illness or return to work.
- The **estimated time of recovery for Flu is 3 – 5 days**, although SMU asks that you remain home until 24 hours after resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- If you are **caring for ill family members**, report sick leave. If you do not have any sick leave, your situation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- If you must **stay home to take care of a child in response to school or daycare facility closures** due to Flu, coordinate any time off with your manager; all efforts should be made to cover critical work, when possible, including alternative work arrangements and working from home. If you must take time off from work, sick leave and/or vacation leave may be used. If you do not have any sick leave, your situation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Work accommodations will be made for faculty and staff that are at higher risk for complications from flu if they get sick. The high-risk population includes the following:

- Age 65 and older
- Pregnant women
- Adults with asthma, other chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders, such as diabetes
- Adults with immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV)

If you are in a high-risk category, SMU recommends the following:

- **Get vaccinated** against the flu, both seasonal and H1N1, as soon as vaccines become available.
- **If you become ill** with flu-like symptoms, **speak with your healthcare provider** as soon as possible and remain home until 24 hours after resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- **Be prepared to work from home** (or an alternate location) when flu is spreading in your immediate work area. Talk with your manager about **how work might be reassigned** so that essential business functions can continue when you are out of the office.

In order to prepare in advance for emergencies, see the [Advance Workplace Preparation for Emergency Situations](#) document.

For a list of frequently asked questions about telecommuting, see the [Telecommuting During Emergency Situations](#) document.