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Subject: Expanded Employee Rights Under COVID-19
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Importance: High

Dear UHD Community,

As mentioned in today's University Relations COVID-19 Update, late yesterday, Judge Lina Hidalgo and Mayor Sylvester Turner announced the extension of the stay-at-home order for Harris County and the City of Houston until April 30. In light of this extension, President Muñoz extended UHD's online operations directive, including telecommuting and telework, until April 30, 2020.

Some employees with essential skills may return to on-campus work later in the month on a limited basis to maintain campus readiness.

Emergency Leave will be extended to applicable employees and non-federal student workers through April 17, 2020, and will be reassessed at that time.

EXPANDED EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought sudden changes to our lives and with those, challenges we didn't expect to face. However, during this difficult time it is important you know you have COVID-19-related resources available to help you when you need it the most.

Beginning today, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) will provide eligible UHD employees emergency paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions begin April 1, 2020 and last through December 31, 2020.

Qualifying Reasons for Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) Related to COVID-19

As a UHD employee, you have the right to Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) related to COVID-19 if you are unable to work, whether in-person or telework, because you:

1. Are subject to a Federal, State or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19.
2. Were advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to COVID-19.
3. Are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and are seeking a medical diagnosis.
4. Are caring for an individual that is subject to an order described in #1 or self-quarantine as described in #2.
5. Must care for your child whose school or place of care is closed (or childcare provider is unavailable) due to COVID-19 related reasons.
6. Find yourself experiencing any other substantially similar condition specified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Employees are eligible from the first day of employment and the Act applies to any employee of the University, including full- and part-time employees, student workers and temporary employees. Eligibility for leave applies to the number of hours the employee is normally scheduled to work over a two-week period. **Employees are not required to use other paid leave before using this leave.**

These rights provide full-time employees (prorated for part-time employees) up to two weeks (80 hours) of pay as follows:

- Regular rate of pay for qualifying reasons #1-3 (up to \$511 daily and \$5,110 total)
- Two-thirds regular rate of pay for qualifying reasons #4-6 (up to \$200 daily and \$2,000 total)

Qualifying Reasons for Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA) Leave

As a UHD employee, you have the right to Emergency Family And Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA) leave if you are unable to work, whether in-person or telework, because you need to care for your child(ren) as their school or place of care has been closed, or the regular childcare provider is unavailable due to a public health emergency with respect to COVID-19.

Employees who have been on the payroll for at least 30 calendar days are eligible for EFMLEA benefits.

Eligibility for EFMLEA depends on how much Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave an employee has already taken in the past 12-month period. Employees will have up to 12 weeks of leave to use from April 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020, for the purposes stated above. This time is included in and not in addition to the total FMLA leave entitlement of 12 weeks in a 12-month period. For example, if an employee has already taken six weeks of FMLA leave, he/she would only be eligible for another six weeks of EFMLEA.

EFMLEA leave is unpaid for the first 10 days of leave; however, employees may use any accrued vacation or sick leave or compensatory time during this time. The employee may also elect to use the paid leave provided under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act, as explained above. After the first 10 days, leave will be paid at 2/3 of the employee's regular rate of pay up to \$200 daily and \$10,000 total.

Under the EFMLEA, employees are also eligible for intermittent leave. Intermittent leave reduces an employee's usual number of working hours per workweek, or hours per workday. For example, an employee may choose to work remotely six hours per day, and take two hours daily of intermittent EFMLEA leave.

Lastly, if both spouses are UHD employees, they are entitled together to a total of twelve weeks of FMLA/EFMLEA between them during the year (rather than twelve weeks each). A jointly filed request form is required from spouses who are both requesting leave.

To apply for these leaves, employees must complete the [Emergency Paid Leave and Emergency FMLEA Form](#) and forward it to Benefits@uhd.edu.

For additional information on these expanded employee rights, please contact Benefits@uhd.edu.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO EMPLOYEES DURING COVID-19

The federal government has approved stimulus legislation to ease some of the financial struggles Americans may suffer due to COVID-19. Although the stimulus legislation may provide some relief, it may not be enough. Many major banks and credit card companies are offering several debt-relief options and payment deferrals for consumers affected by COVID-19.

If you are having trouble making your mortgage, car, credit card or student loan payments, we encourage you to reach out to your financial lenders and ask for assistance.

Best,

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