Employee Expectations & Compliance Processes for the use of Face Coverings

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The University has issued a university-wide Administrative Directive requiring the use of face coverings to promote campus health and safety. The University expects the Wildcat community to demonstrate our core values of Compassion and Integrity by universally complying with the directive. Here we summarize the expectations and the compliance processes that apply to the Administrative Directive with respect to University employees.

We Wear Because We Care

The health and wellbeing of all students, staff and faculty, guests, and visitors to our campus is the University of Arizona’s top priority.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 mainly spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can be inhaled by or land on and infect people nearby. While it is essential for anyone who is sick or has been exposed to COVID-19 to isolate at home, we now know that people who do not show symptoms of COVID-19 may spread the disease without knowing they are infected.

To limit the spread of COVID-19, the most important public health measures are (i) to maintain physical distancing of 6 feet or more at all times, and (ii) to wear a face covering to provide a barrier that reduces the person-to-person spread of airborne respiratory droplets. Ongoing scientific studies show that consistent wearing of face coverings in public spaces is an effective strategy for slowing COVID-19 infections (see the CDC guidance on face coverings).

We cannot provide excellent teaching, research, service, and extension experiences unless all members of the Wildcat community work together to protect each other’s health and safety. Each of us is responsible for knowing and following all applicable University guidelines and policies, including the University Staff Standards of Conduct, Classified Staff Rules of Conduct, and Professional Conduct policies.
Contact the Dean of Students or review current student conduct policies for additional information on students.

The University will provide two face coverings at no cost to students, staff, and faculty. The University will also provide ongoing communication and education as employees and students return to campus.

If employees believe their disability or medical condition precludes them from wearing any type of face covering, they should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to discuss a potential accommodation. DRC staff will explore potential face covering alternatives (such as face shields) and alternative work arrangements. Should an accommodation be put in place, DRC will confirm the accommodation with the employee’s supervisor.

**Engagement and Compliance**

**Supervisors will set clear expectations with all employees.** Supervisors will review the face covering expectation with every employee and reiterate why it is important that everyone wear a face covering. Supervisors and employees should be familiar with the Administrative Directive on face coverings and employees should ask their supervisors if they have questions or need clarification on the directive.

Remembering to carry and wear a face covering requires creating new habits, so it is expected that verbal reminders may be needed initially.

Disciplinary action for failure to comply with this directive will be handled consistent with the University’s Performance Management Guidelines.

**Employees Who Refuse to Wear Face Coverings (Willful Violations)**

If an employee refuses to wear a face covering in violation of the Administrative Directive, the supervisor should ask the employee to leave the work area and immediately contact the department’s HR Consultant. The HR Consultant will work with the employee and supervisor to evaluate the situation and determine next steps, including whether discipline is appropriate. Generally, the University will deal with an employee who refuses to wear a face covering in the same manner it deals with employees who willfully refuse to comply with University safety rules or who engage in harmful or dangerous conduct. Unless otherwise prohibited by law, employees refusing to wear a face covering will be asked to leave campus. Any time away from work because an employee refuses to wear a face covering will be unpaid, and employees who continue to refuse to comply with the Administrative
Directive may be subject to discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment.

**Employees Who Forget or Fail to Wear A Face Covering (Non-Willful Violations)**

The below sets forth steps that could be taken when an employee repeatedly violates the Face Covering Directive, but is not refusing to wear a face covering. While supervisors are encouraged to use informal or formal corrective action to address inappropriate conduct and policy violations, corrective actions are not progressive and may occur in any order, depending on the individual circumstances. As such, the below is merely an example. Discipline decisions will be based on the individual circumstances of each situation.

- **Issue a first reminder of expectations.** In response to the first instance when an employee is not wearing a face covering, the supervisor should politely remind the employee of the need for a face covering. If the employee does not have a face covering, the unit supervisor should provide a face covering if available. If an extra face covering is not readily available, the employee should be instructed to leave and return wearing a face covering (using vacation or unpaid time for the period of time the employee is away from work). The supervisor should document the conversation with the employee.

- **Provide a verbal warning to reinforce expectations.** If the same employee continues to not wear a face covering when and where required (but agrees to wear it when reminded), the supervisor should remind the employee of the initial conversation(s) about expectations, inform the employee that they are being verbally warned, and explain that further violations can and will lead to additional disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. The supervisor should document the verbal warning in a follow-up email or document.

- **Issue a written warning.** If violations continue, the supervisor should work with the unit’s assigned Human Resources Consultant to issue a written warning.

- **Pursue further disciplinary action.** If an employee continues to violate the Directive, Supervisors should work with the assigned Human Resources Consultant to determine how to proceed with additional disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.