

Sudden disruptions due to family caregiving issues related to COVID-19: What are the options?

The circumstances surrounding COVID-19 are constantly evolving. As a result, employees may experience challenges with onsite or remote work due to caregiving concerns related to COVID-19. Some employees may experience an inability to work because of the need to provide care to a family member who has COVID-19, or challenges arranging for childcare due to issues related to COVID-19.

This document will provide an overview for employees who are experiencing sudden disruptions due to family caregiving issues. For example, an employee may experience the unanticipated, same-day closure of a daycare center on a day they were planning to work onsite or remotely. Or, an employee may learn of the need to care for a family member who is subject to quarantine or an isolation order for a limited time.

Employees who are experiencing longer term concerns should refer to the following document: [Employee concerns about onsite or remote work related to COVID-19: What are the options?](#)

Employees who are concerned about sudden disruptions due to family caregiving issues related to COVID-19 may have options available to them. The university will work with each employee to understand their individual concerns and determine if there are options based on the nature of an employee's concern, their duties, the work environment, and workplace needs.

Help Is Available

It is helpful to understand your options when you may be facing sudden disruptions due to family caregiving issues related to COVID-19. This document will provide you with an overview of the various paths you might explore with your human resources (HR) representative or supervisor when faced with a sudden family caregiving concern.

In some cases, the options can be complex, and understanding the differences between them can be challenging. You will find links below to detailed information about the more complex options, such as leave time. Please consult the HR contact in your school, college or division as you explore your options. You can find your local HR department at hr.wisc.edu/contact. Your manager or supervisor is another good resource.

Options that May Be Considered in the Event of Sudden Disruptions Due to Family Caregiving Issues Related to COVID-19

NOTE: You may not qualify for all options shown here. Please see your local HR department for details.

Three general categories of options may apply:

1. Workplace flexibilities
2. Leave time
3. Other options

1. Workplace Flexibilities

Definition

Flexibilities in which work is performed at an off-campus work site on a sporadic basis and does not follow a regular, repeated schedule.

Additional Information

Options may include, but are not limited to:

- Work performed at an off-campus work site (such as a home) under limited circumstances when an employee cannot work onsite because of a COVID-19 related incident. (A *Remote Work Agreement* is not required when this flexibility is provided.)
- Flexible schedule / flexible time (“flex time”)

Who to Contact

Your supervisor or the HR contact in your school, college or division. Find your HR department at hr.wisc.edu/contact.

2. Leave Time

UW–Madison provides a variety of potential leave options to employees when they are unable to work or perform work at an off-campus work site for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Paid or unpaid leave may apply, including Family and Medical Leave (FMLA).

Additional Information

- Employees may qualify for a paid or unpaid leave of absence. Employees may qualify for the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and/or Wisconsin’s Family and Medical Leave Act (WFMLA).
- Employees may be able to use paid leave that they are eligible for, including Vacation, Personal Holiday, Banked Leave, and Sick Leave in accordance with leave policies.
- The addendum to the Sick Leave policy was re-instituted on August 30, 2021 and expires on May 22, 2022. This addendum provides provisions for sick leave to be used for additional COVID-19 related reasons (like provisions adopted in 2020). See the [Addendum to the Sick Leave Policy](#) for details.

- In certain circumstances, employees may take a voluntary leave without pay (VLWOP). Supervisor/unit approval may be required unless the leave qualified under FMLA/WFMLA or medical leave. Contact the benefits office at your school, college or division HR regarding possible impacts on benefits.

Considerations

You may not qualify for all leave options.

The leave options that you may qualify for are based on a number of factors, including:

- The eligibility requirements for each leave program Alternative work week
- Your employment category (Faculty, Academic Staff, Limited Appointees or University Staff)
- The pay basis of your appointment (annual-basis or academic year-basis)
- The reason you are unable to work and are requesting leave
- Prior leave you have used or taken

How to Learn More

hr.wisc.edu/covid19/leave

Who to Contact

The HR contact in your school, college or division. Find your HR department at hr.wisc.edu/contact.

3. Other Options

You and your HR contact may wish to discuss other possible approaches to your family caregiving concerns.

Options may include, but are not limited to:

- Job share or split
- Alternative work week (e.g., compressed work week or reduced work week)
- Variable hours
- Reassignment of duties
- Leave of absence or career break

Considerations

Your options will be based upon factors such as:

- The nature of your concern
- Your duties
- The work environment
- Workplace needs

Who to Contact

- Your supervisor or the HR contact in your school, college or division. Find your HR department at hr.wisc.edu/contact.
- In situations involving instructional responsibilities, contact your department chair and school/college leadership.

Options that Do *Not* Apply in the Event of Sudden Disruptions Due to Family Caregiving Issues Related to COVID-19

There are two options that may be applicable in other situations, but not in the event of sudden disruptions due to family caregiving issues related to COVID-19. Additional detail is provided in the following document:

[Employee concerns about onsite or remote work related to COVID-19: What are the options?](#)

1. Remote Work
2. ADA accommodations

1. Remote Work

NOTE: Remote Work requires a Remote Work Agreement and applies when there is a regular, repeated schedule of work performed at an off-campus work site. Please refer to the details below.

Definition

A work arrangement in which some or all work is performed at an off-campus work site such as home or in an office space near home. This definition does not include workplace flexibilities, research trips, sabbaticals, or permanent off-campus work sites established by the university (e.g., field stations, CERN, IceCube).

Additional Information

Remote work may be an option for performing work in some circumstances; however, an on-campus presence for employees is often critical to maintain the highest possible quality of job function or campus service, particularly given UW–Madison is a pre-eminent residential campus where students work and live on or near campus.

Considerations

Remote work arrangements are considered on a case-by-case basis by evaluating all of the following factors:

- Job responsibilities
- The effective functioning of the overall unit
- Potential cost savings to the university, school/college/division, and department
- The needs and preferences of the employee
- Employee performance
- Equipment needs, workspace design considerations, office space, and scheduling issues
- Adverse impact between employees with similar job responsibilities in the work unit (prevent inequities)

How to Learn More

hr.wisc.edu/remote-work

Who to Contact

Your supervisor or the HR contact in your school, college or division. Find your HR department at hr.wisc.edu/contact.

2. ADA Accommodations

Accommodation requests under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) may be considered only if your concern is related to your own underlying medical condition/disability. For this reason, they do not apply to family caregiving concerns.

Definition

A disability accommodation is any change or modification to the hiring process, a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done. It enables a qualified individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform the duties of a job, and enjoy benefits and privileges of employment equal to those without disabilities, without causing significant difficulty or disruption in the workplace or posing a health or safety threat.

Considerations

If your concern is related to your own underlying medication condition/disability, your request may be considered a disability accommodation request under the ADA.

How to Learn More

employeedisabilities.wisc.edu

Who to Contact

Contact your Divisional Disability Representative (DDR) directly. To find your DDR, visit employeedisabilities.wisc.edu/divisional-disability-representatives-ddr.

Related Resources

Websites

Family Caregiving

hr.wisc.edu/covid19/family-caregiving

Leave Options Related to COVID-19

hr.wisc.edu/covid19/leave

Remote Work: Guidance and Resources for Employees

hr.wisc.edu/remote-work

Reasonable Accommodations and Workplace Flexibilities

hr.wisc.edu/covid19/reasonable-accommodations-and-workplace-flexibilities-related-to-covid-19

Policies

Leave Options Related to COVID-19

hr.wisc.edu/covid19/leave

UW–Madison Sick Leave Policy

policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5051

UW–Madison Remote Work Policy

policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5087

UW–Madison Vacation Policy

policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5052

UW–Madison COVID-19 Workplace Safety Policy

policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5086

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