Guide for Returning to the Workplace

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Introduction

Middlebury is engaged in an intensive planning effort aimed at resuming on-campus activities to the greatest extent possible, as quickly and as prudently as possible, in light of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

This Return to Work Guide is a draft of recommended health and safety protocols to put in place when the institution makes the decision to begin its gradual resumption of on-campus activities. It is intended to apply to all employees while on campus or in Middlebury facilities. We anticipate these guidelines will evolve as the changing severity of the pandemic and our ability to respond to it allow us to move through the phases of our return to campus framework, subject to state and local regulations and our own health assessment. The guidelines will be updated, edited, and recirculated to the community in later phases of our response as we are able to increase the density and level of activity on campus.

The guidelines are based on detailed recommendations of the Return to Campus taskforce.

The initial resumption of on-campus activities under these guidelines does not mean a return to normal operations.

- Once Middlebury decides to begin its gradual resumption of on-campus activities, they will be limited to those that require a person to be present. Any and all activities that can be accomplished at home via telework should continue to be done at home until further notice, and people should only be on campus for the time periods necessary to accomplish required campus activities.
- Among other changes, face coverings will be mandatory on campus. Cleaning procedures will be greatly augmented, and physical distancing remains the rule.
- Central to these guidelines is an understanding that some members of our community face a greater risk from COVID-19 than others. Processes have been put into place to allow faculty and staff to seek accommodations or adjustments as warranted by their individual circumstances.

These guidelines are subject to update. The guidelines will be revised based upon state and local regulations, public health guidance, and community input.

Guiding Principles

Middlebury is responsible for ensuring that its workplace is safe for staff and faculty—and by extension, the communities of which we are a part. Our policies and protocols for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic are rooted in safety for our faculty, staff, and students. Returning faculty and staff to on-campus work will occur in a gradual, measured way. On-campus work will be aligned with the phased approach to mitigate potential risks and protect the safety of our community.

Some members of our community face a greater risk from COVID-19 than others. Processes are in place to allow faculty and staff to seek accommodations or adjustments as warranted by their individual circumstances. Visit the Working Safely at Middlebury webpage for detailed information and resources.

Middlebury's plans will also be aligned and consistent with local orders and ordinances of Addison and Monterey Counties, as well as the states of Vermont and California's Phased Reopening Models. Middlebury's plans will also follow recommendations from the federal government (Opening Guidelines), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Vermont and California's Departments of Public Health, and the Middlebury Emergency Management Team.

Health and Safety Guidelines and Expectations

Middlebury has established a Return to Campus Guide for reopening the Vermont campus. This guide describes Middlebury College's phased approach to opening our campus for staff, students, and faculty, and the multilayered protective protocols we will operate under for fall 2020, if not all of the 2020–2021 academic year. The details in the guide will inform our campus community about health and safety requirements, policy changes, adjustments to academics and campus life, and updates to available services required for safe use of our campus.

All staff and faculty are expected to fully comply with the policies, protocols, and guidelines outlined in the Return to Campus Guide (for Vermont employees) and this Return to Work Guide (for all employees). Noncompliance with COVID-19 campus health and safety guidelines could result in loss of access to Middlebury facilities, as well as corrective and/or disciplinary actions.

Returning to Work on Campus

Phased Process

Middlebury will proceed through a phased resumption of on-campus activities in accordance with state regulations and our own assessment of the public health of the community. That process will involve a phased return of individuals to campus over time in a coordinated process to ensure appropriate physical distancing, administrative controls, availability of personal protective equipment (PPE), and, as determined by public health experts, appropriate testing capabilities for COVID-19.

Middlebury will assess expanded operations based on mission-critical operations, ability to control and manage specific work environments, and necessity to access on-site resources. These decisions, once approved, will be communicated by senior leadership. We anticipate that the need to reduce the number of people coming to campus (density) to meet the physical distancing requirements will continue for some time, and many employees who can continue to work effectively remotely will likely continue to do so for the near future.

The phased return to campus will be tightly coordinated to mitigate potential risks and protect the safety of our community. No unit or department should increase on-campus activity levels beyond current needs to support critical on-site operations without approval from their vice president or senior leadership member.

When assessing whether an employee should be asked to return to campus to work, managers should use the Workforce Planning guidelines and Decision Tree to guide their decision making. Before returning to campus,

employees must complete the safety and return to work requirements.
(https://www.middlebury.edu/office/announcements/working-safely-middlebury).

Staffing Options

Once the decision is made, departments should evaluate the staffing needs required to meet fall operations in ways that minimize staff exposure. This may include reevaluation of the service levels and delivery methods. Areas will identify the work that can continue to be done remotely, as well as that which must be done in person. Departments must also conduct a hazard assessment for each position (when, where, and how likely the individual in the position may be exposed to COVID-19 based upon job functions) in an effort to minimize and adjust activities that present greater risk, and implement strategies to maintain required physical distancing measures and reduce population density within buildings and work spaces. These strategies may include the following:

Remote Work: Those who can work remotely to fulfill some or all of their work responsibilities should continue to do so to reduce the number of individuals on campus and the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus. These arrangements, which should be approved by the immediate supervisor, can be done in a full or partial day/week schedule as appropriate.

Alternating Days: In order to limit the number of individuals and interactions among those on campus, departments should consider scheduling partial staffing on alternating days. Such schedules will help enable physical distancing, especially in areas with large common workspaces.

Staggered Reporting/Departing: The beginning and end of the workday typically bring many people together at common entry/exit points of buildings. Staggering reporting and departure times by at least 30 minutes will reduce traffic in common areas to meet physical distancing requirements. (See Entry/Exit for further details.)

Voluntary Reduction of FTE. During this time, staff may elect to reduce their FTE for the remainder of the year, or longer, provided that their manager approves the reduction. Managers should give consideration to the impacts of such a reduction on the workload of the department. Human Resources is available to support managers in making these decisions.

Guidance for Specific Workplace Scenarios

The COVID-19 pandemic requires multiple layers of protection to serve as safeguards for our community. When used together consistently, the holes (or weaknesses) in any single layer of protection may be reduced by the strengths of multiple layers of protection. The more layers of effective interventions that are implemented, the less likely your activities will contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

Working in Office Environments

If you work in an open environment, you must maintain at least six feet of distance from others. You should wear a face covering at all times while in a shared workspace/room.

If you work in an office, no more than one person should be in the same room unless the required six-foot distancing can be consistently maintained. If another person is in your office, face coverings should be worn at all times. A face covering is not required if you are working alone in a confined office space (does not include partitioned work areas in a large open environment).

Face coverings should be worn by any staff in a reception/receiving area. Face coverings should be used when on any Middlebury campus.

Meetings

Convening in groups increases the risk of viral transmission. Where feasible, meetings should be held in whole or part using the extensive range of available collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, telephone, etc.).

In-person meetings are limited to the restrictions of local, state, and Middlebury requirements, and individuals must always maintain six feet of separation for social distancing requirements. Departments should remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in meeting rooms to support physical distancing practices between attendees. All attendees should wear a face covering while sharing space in a common room.

During your time on-site, you are encouraged to communicate with your colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, instant message, telephone, or other available technology rather than face-to-face. You can also use a range of available collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Jabber, etc.).

Meals

Before and after eating, you should wash your hands thoroughly to reduce the potential transmission of the virus.

If you are eating in your work environment (break room, office, etc.), maintain six feet of distance between you and others. Only remove your face covering in order to eat, then put it back on. Departments should remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in employee break rooms to support physical distancing practices between employees. Disinfect all surfaces, including table, refrigerator handle, coffee machine, etc., after using them in common areas.

Entry/Exit

Certain departments and building safety officers may identify usable building access points and coordinate arrival and departure times of staff to reduce congestion during typical "rush hours" of the business day. Staff arrival and departures should be scheduled in 30-minute increments to reduce personal interactions at building access points, hallways, stairs, elevators, etc.

Once you have been instructed to return to the workplace, you should report to work or depart work through the designated building access and at the designated time to limit the number of people entering and exiting buildings at any one time.

Entry to many buildings will be regulated and monitored. If your building has card access, your Middlebury ID card is required for entry to all buildings, and you may not hold or prop open exterior doors for any other person.

Visitors, trainees, and guests are not allowed on worksites during this time.

Violation of these guidelines may result in the immediate revocation of building access privileges, as well as corrective action.

Signage and Posters

A signage system has been developed to inform our community of health and safety requirements that are in place for safe use of our spaces. For example, signage at building entrances reminds those entering to complete their daily health check and to wear a face covering. Visuals for physical distancing will be present in certain locations, such as those that are public-facing service areas, to serve as a reminder to maintain a safe distance from other individuals. Directional arrows will indicate the recommended travel direction in some buildings to limit congregation in high traffic areas.

Special Circumstances

Unable to Work Due to Illness or Exposure

Individuals who are unable to work due to illness of self or the need to care for an immediate family member who is ill should contact Human Resources to explore options for medical leaves of absence.

Returning to Work after COVID-19 Illness or Exposure

All employees will need to provide a release from their healthcare provider prior to returning to the workplace. Such a release should reflect the guidance of public health officials at the time.

Support for Individuals at a Higher Risk

Middlebury is taking a wide variety of extraordinary precautions in fall 2020 to reduce risk to all members of our community. However, some individuals may have higher risk of severe illness and should (1) review the CDC

guidance, (2) consult with their healthcare provider, and (3) develop an individual plan prior to requesting assistance. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified groups at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness and Other-at-Risk Populations).

Middlebury employees who have any of the medical conditions noted by the CDC and require reasonable accommodations in order to perform their job duties should submit a request to Human Resources, consistent with Middlebury's ADA policy (or http://www.middlebury.edu/offices/business/hr/staffandfaculty/ada). Documentation from the individual's healthcare provider must be submitted.

Reasonable accommodations must be necessary, reasonably connected to the condition/limitation, and not an undue burden.

<u>If the issue identified does not meet the legal definition of a disability, Middlebury will make reasonable efforts to consider and implement modifications. Requests for reasonable accommodations from individuals with qualifying disabilities will be given priority.</u>

Returning to Work after Travel

Business travel is suspended for all faculty and staff. Individuals should give careful consideration to personal travel; if electing to travel, individuals must follow the quarantine guidance pertinent to their destination, as well as the Vermont or California requirements upon their return. If an individual is unable to work during any required quarantine, they may use CTO to remain in a paid status. If they do not have sufficient CTO, the quarantine period will be deemed an unpaid leave.

Childcare or School Closures

Individuals who are experiencing challenges balancing work with caring for children in the event of school closures are encouraged to speak with their supervisors about possible adjustments, such as flexible schedules, changes in shifts, telework arrangements, or time away from work. Human Resources is available to assist with considering the options.

Mental and Emotional Well-Being

It is recognized that COVID-19 creates stress from fear of becoming ill, loved ones becoming ill, financial insecurity, and the impact on our normal routines, including having to practice physical distancing. Middlebury offers a variety of support resources:

Employee and Family Assistance Program: New Directions is available to offer emotional support during this stressful period. Telephonic or video counseling is available, and you can access this service by calling 800-828-6025 or visiting the **EFAP website** (**New Directions**).

Resources for Employees: Middlebury is committed to supporting your overall health and well-being as we deal with the effects of COVID-19. Visit **Resources** (**https://www.middlebury.edu/office/human-resources/employee-resources**) for more information and resources to offer support, manage stress, and enhance your resilience.

Maintaining Our Inclusive Community

Middlebury is committed to maintaining an educational working and living environment that is free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. For every member of the community to thrive—especially as we continue to navigate life and College operations during a global pandemic—we must seek to foster mutual respect, support, and inclusion.

During this public health event, when there are many unknowns, taking care of each other is just as important as taking care of ourselves. Making assumptions about or engaging in negative treatment of others based on perceived symptoms, medical conditions or abilities, national origin, racial and ethnic characteristics, or any other protected status hurts our community. Every person's care, compassion, and empathy for each other makes a positive difference.

Acts of discrimination and harassment run counter to Middlebury's values and policies, including (insert links). Please know that the Office of Institutional Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion remains open and available to the entire community.

Addressing Noncompliance with Guidelines

Failure to comply with these guidelines places our community at risk for spreading the virus, which could endanger community health and result in further disruption of educational activities.

Every member of the community is empowered to request compliance with guidelines set forth here and in other institutional communications. Those who encounter noncompliance with guidelines may notify the institutions.

Repeated noncompliance with the current COVID-19 workplace safety guidelines will result in suspended facility access for a period of time and corrective and/or disciplinary action, dependent on the severity and frequency of the infraction. Human Resources must be consulted regarding any proposed corrective and/or disciplinary action for employees.