Frequently Asked Questions Related to the Furlough of Temple University Staff
Supporting Temple Faculty Physicians

Q: Why is Temple University furloughing some practice plan employees?
A: Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and the resulting mandates from Commonwealth and City officials to engage in social distancing, Temple Faculty Physicians (TFP) has had to dramatically reduce outpatient visits to only the most urgent patients, and cancel all elective surgeries and procedures. This has had a significant impact on revenues, resulting in a weekly loss of approximately $1 million. To ensure the clinical practice’s future financial stability, we will be furloughing employees who no longer have full time work to perform.

Q: Who is being furloughed?
A: Until now, Temple has continued to pay all staff supporting Temple Faculty Physicians since March 16 regardless of their ability to work during the stay at home orders. However, we can no longer continue to pay individuals who are unable to work. Employees whose ability to work is substantially limited or not possible, whether due to a reduction in the amount of work available or just the nature of the work performed, will be furloughed.

Q: How long will my furlough last?
A: While we cannot predict the future and this situation is very fluid, the guidance by state, local, and federal entities indicate that we should be able to normalize operations by early summer. We do anticipate keeping with that schedule and restarting normal operations cautiously and in accordance with best practices to ensure the safety of our staff, faculty and students as well as our patients. The University will notify you when you are able to return to work.

You will also, from time to time, be notified of potential opportunities to work at Temple University Hospital. If you are interested in these opportunities, you should advise your supervisor.

Q: What is a Furlough?
A: A furlough is a temporary unpaid leave of absence. It is not a termination or the elimination of jobs.

Q: Will I lose my healthcare or retirement benefits?
A: Employees covered by the University health coverage plans will continue to be covered by University medical/prescription, dental, vision with no contribution necessary from employees during any unpaid
furlough. Employees covered by the 1199C health coverage plans will retain coverage as provided under 1199C’s plan and approved by its Trustees, that will be monitoring coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently 1199C health coverage is one month for each year of participation in the Health and Welfare Fund for employees that provide proof of being furloughed. The maximum coverage is 6 months. If there are any questions or concerns about 1199C health coverage, please contact 1199C’s Director of the Benefit and Pension Fund, Laverne Devalia at (215) 735-5720.

Retirement benefit contributions (employer and employee) will be suspended during the time of furlough.

**Q: What happens to other employee benefit contributions?**

A: Contributions for benefits that are solely dependent upon employee contributions, such as additional life insurance, survivor insurance, accidental death & dismemberment, short term disability, long term disability and flexible spending accounts will be suspended during the period of unpaid furlough. When you return to work, all deduction amounts missed will be distributed and deducted over the remaining pays in the 2020 calendar year. Your coverage in those programs, however, will continue during the period of furlough.

If you do not wish to continue any of these benefits now or upon your return to work, please contact the Benefits Office at benefits@temple.edu. Note that some of these benefits may be subject to insurability (medical questionnaire) if you choose to discontinue the benefit and re-enroll at a later date.

**Q: Will my retirement plan contribution be continued?**

A: All contributions (employee and employer) to the Defined Contribution or Defined Benefit Plans will be suspended during your unpaid furlough time and will restart again upon your return.

**Q: What will happen to my current participation in the Post Retirement Prefunding Plan?**

A: Your contributions will be suspended. When you return to work, the amount of the contributions missed will be deducted over the remaining paychecks in the 2020 calendar year.

**Q: Will I still be eligible for Tuition Remission during this time?**

A: Yes, Tuition Remission will be continued during this time for both you and your dependents.

**Q: Can I still access the Employee Assistance Program during this time?**

A: Yes, you can continue to access the Employee Assistance Program the same way you have always done.

**Q: Can I continue to participate and earn credits in the Total Wellness Rewards Program?**

A: Yes, you can continue to take advantage of the on-line resources that are available.
Q: Will I be responsible to pay my union dues and wage garnishments on my own during the furlough?
A: Once you are no longer receiving pay, these deductions will stop. You will be required to contact the agency responsible for wage garnishments and make payment arrangements on your own. Since most union dues calculations are primarily wage based, deductions will stop until you return to work.

Q: Can I use my vacation and/or personal time to receive pay during the furlough?
A: Yes. You may elect to receive all remaining FY20 vacation and personal time and up to ½ of your vacation entitlement for FY21. You may receive this time either in a lump sum payment, or have it applied over time instead of going unpaid. If you wish to receive this benefit time you must inform your supervisor as to how much time you would like to be paid, and by which method (lump sum or over time) no later than 12 Noon, Friday, May 1, 2020. If you are continuing to receive pay, your regular benefit deductions will continue.

Q: Will I be eligible to apply for unemployment compensation during the time that I am furloughed?
A: Once your paid time ends, you may file for unemployment compensation immediately. This will include the additional $600 per week under the CARES Act (available until July 31). Please refer to your state’s guidelines for unemployment compensation regarding specific details and provisions surrounding application, eligibility, and collection of benefits. The link for the Pennsylvania state unemployment office is: www.uc.pa.gov; you can also contact the state UC office via phone at 800-313-7284. The University website also has useful information to assist with applying for unemployment benefits under the COVID FAQs.

Q: How will taxable fringe benefits, such as graduate tuition in excess of $5,250, dependent tuition, and home loan, be included in my income? Will I be responsible for paying the taxes on these benefits when I return?
A: Once your paid time ends, taxable fringe benefits will also stop. We will continue to accumulate the benefit and any accrued taxes during your furlough will deducted from regular pay over the remaining pay periods in the calendar year once you return to an active, paid status.

Q: Will my supervisor (or a co-worker) contact me with questions about my position duties during my furlough?
A: During your furlough you will not be expected to work and you will only get questions from your supervisor if absolutely necessary.

Q: Will I have access to my email during the furlough?
A: Yes, but you are not expected to work and you should not work. Please work with your supervisor to create an appropriate out of office message and a referral for those who may contact you during your furlough.