

[Frequently Asked Questions for employees regarding COVID-19](#)

Q1. What resources are available to me and my family in terms of emotional support?

A crisis or traumatic event can trigger overwhelming emotional responses. People are affected in their hearts and minds which can undermine healthy communities and social relationships at home and at work. As we hear more about the spread of COVID-19 around the world, it's important that you understand how we can support you.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Click [here](#) to be taken directly to the Employee Assistance Plan webpage.

- 24/7 confidential access to professional support to help employees manage stress, anxiety, grief, financial concerns, and much more
- Connect to support by phone, video, or chat anytime, anywhere
- Vast library of online resources for coping with trauma, building resiliency, self-care, managing change, and much more

What to do if you are stressed because of the news

If you're feeling nervous about the coronavirus, you're not alone. Being concerned and empathetic about this outbreak is normal. However, you may experience feelings of discomfort, impacting concentration, productivity and even disrupting sleep patterns.

What you can do to feel better

- Stick to the facts as communicated by public-health agencies or medical professionals. Instead of reading every article and going to every website, staying offline for a period can be beneficial. If you're concerned, sites that include accurate information include the World Health Organization, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Ottawa Public Health and the official government public health websites for locations abroad.
- Try and keep it in perspective. Social media and news outlets can amplify misinformation. Keep in mind that there's a concerted global effort to try and contain this virus, and the World Health Organization is maintaining a webpage with answers to common questions.
- Follow prevention tips to stay healthy. Washing your hands often and properly is the single most effective way to stop the spread of disease.
- Practice stress and anxiety management. There are many proven ways to reduce stress and anxiety: getting enough sleep, balanced diet and hydration, exercise, talking about your fears with others, meditation, and more. Find the self-care practice that works for you.

- Seek help from your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). You have access to professional assistance and resources 24/7 – from connecting with a counsellor to learning how to meditate, find confidential help that can help you move forward.

Building resiliency in times of uncertainty

We are living in a complex world with change all around us. Naturally, this can make you feel uncertain or fearful about the present and future. The good news is that resiliency – the ability to thrive in times of change and uncertainty – is learned, and you can start building your resilience today. Use the tips below to take on a more flexible, resilient mindset.

- Accepting what's out of your control. Focusing on that which you have no control over will leave you feeling frustrated and exhausted. There are certain circumstances or decisions that are not in your power to control. Let go of them. Doing so will help you move on and focus your energy more positively. Remember: though you may not be able to change these realities, you can change how you respond to them.
- Embrace change. There will always be change. Instead of concentrating on the disruptive aspects, take a flexible approach and accept that change is a fundamental part of life that can also bring opportunities and positive outcomes.
- Staying focused on the big picture. It's easy to get so wrapped up in the details of an event that you blow it out of proportion. Avoid "catastrophizing" and focus in on the real (or most realistic) impact. Looking at it from a broader perspective can help you more accurately assess its significance.
- Maintain a positive attitude. Resilience doesn't mean you have a positive feeling about every negative situation. It means that despite something going wrong you believe you can and will do your best to deal with the situation and move forward.
- Connecting with others. Having people around you with whom you can share feelings, discuss problems and receive advice is an essential part of weathering life's storms. It's also important to reach out for help when you feel overwhelmed by a situation.

Access your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at workhealthlife.com.

Q2. What happens if the College temporarily suspends classes and other activities?

Employees who have made arrangements with their managers to work from home should implement these measures, effective immediately. Employees who may be able to work from home but have not yet made these arrangements should stay at home and contact their managers starting Monday March 16th to confirm these arrangements. Further determinations regarding work from home capabilities and critical employees to sustain College operations, in the current context, will be made on Monday March 16, and communicated to all thereafter.

Full time employees will receive regular pay.

Part-time, sessional and partial load employees will receive their current pay rates.

Part-time support and administrative employees will be paid for their regularly scheduled hours.

Make sure to connect with your immediate manager for work details as the college remains open. Your manager should be outlining the expectations for work deliverables during this time. All college policies should be adhered to in the same manner as being in the workplace.

Q3. What happens if the college is ordered to temporarily close? Will employees get paid?

During a temporary shut-down all full-time employees will continue to be paid. Part-time employees will receive compensation for the shifts that had been scheduled and they otherwise would have worked.

Q4. I am well and my children are not impacted, should I continue to report for my regular duties?

All employees who are able should be working from home after having an email or telephone discussion with your manager.

The College is continuing to monitor the changing situation.

Q5. My child's daycare/school is closed due to the pandemic, may I work from home?

Yes, if your job responsibilities are compatible with working from home, and you have your immediate manager's approval. Managers will clearly outline expectations and deliverables.

Please ensure you communicate with your manager to determine your next steps for remaining at home and avoiding non-essential travel, as per the guidance from Public Health.

Q6. Can employees be assigned to work from home, another work location, or non-standard hours?

Yes, during a pandemic outbreak, employees may have their work location temporarily changed to another location on campus, in some cases, to their homes or experience a temporary change in regular working hours. The manager will determine whether working at home is feasible or if an on-campus location is more appropriate. Employees temporarily assigned to another location should be returned to their normal work place as soon as possible, consistent with operational needs.

Q7. Can employees in high-risk health categories request to work from home to minimize their risk, or if they have a dependent family member who has an underlying health condition which may put them at increased risk?

If employees believe they are at high risk, they may make a request to remain at home/work from home. Please contact your manager to discuss options.

Guidance will be role specific. Each case will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis considering individual circumstances.

Q8. What if an employee has symptoms of illness?

Employees who are ill should remain at home and off work. If employees present at work and have symptoms, they will be required to return home. Employees need to keep in regular contact with their manager by email or phone, for the duration of their illness until it is agreed that a return to work is advisable. Employees who believe they may be affected by COVID-19 should follow the [Ottawa Public Health](#) instructions regarding seeking medical attention and reporting.

Q9. Will employees receive compensation if sent home because of illness?

Full time employees who are advised to self-isolate by their physician or Ottawa Public Health in accordance with Public Health guidelines are entitled to Short-term Disability leave as stipulated in College policies and collective agreements (articles 8 for Support Staff and article 17 for Academic Staff). Additionally, refer to Article 12 and 21 for Support Staff and Academic Staff respectively for personal leave with pay.

Part-time employee who are advised by their physician or Ottawa Public Health that they must self-isolate in accordance with Public Health guidelines, the college will, as an exceptional measure, pay the individual for regularly scheduled shifts.

Additionally, the government has announced as of March 11 that the one-week waiting period for Employment Insurance sickness benefits has been waived for those affected by COVID-19.

Q10. During an influenza pandemic, can a healthy employee refuse to come to work, travel, or perform other job duties because of a belief that by doing so, they would be at an increased risk of catching influenza?

If the College is continuing with regular operations, the collective agreements remain in effect and employees should refer to the collective agreements if they have any concerns regarding work practices or working conditions.

Note: The right to refuse work relates to equipment, machines, devices, things or the physical

condition of the workplace, if an employee has reason to believe that it is likely to endanger themselves or another worker.

With respect to COVID-19, preventative measures and guidance from public health agencies are being monitored and implemented by the College; hence the work refusal process is not applicable.

Q11. Can an employee be required to perform work, outside of the employee's job description, in the event of absences from work due to COVID-19?

Yes. In the event of high rates of absenteeism, employees may be required to perform other duties and responsibilities required to provide needed services for our students.

Employee's duties are not necessarily restricted to what is written in the job description. Employees are entitled to be paid the appropriate rate of pay for the performance of duties which are outside their normal level of responsibilities.

Employees will not be asked to perform duties that they are not qualified to perform. As part of the College's Pandemic Plan, department heads have been encouraged to cross train employees to ensure adequate backup is available for critical functions.

Q12. During the COVID-19 pandemic, can we implement alternative work schedules (e.g., flex time, staggered shifts or alternative work arrangements) to minimize contact?

Yes. Efforts to minimize contacts between large groups of individuals (referred to as "social distancing") will become an important element in the prevention of the spread of infection.

Q13. During the COVID-19 outbreak, can I, as a manager, cancel staff vacation that has already been approved?

In circumstances where there are serious staffing shortages, managers have the authority to cancel leave requests.

Q14. If an employee believes they have COVID-19 do we require a medical certificate?

At this time, Algonquin College will not require a doctor's note to substantiate COVID-19 illness. Once the COVID-19 concerns have abated, the College will return to its usual practice with regard to medical substantiation. Employees are required to maintain regular contact with their manager to assess their ability to return to work and follow public health requirements.

Q15. Should employees stay home if members of their family have COVID-19 or if they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19?

Employees who think they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 should first contact Ottawa Public Health for guidance and take extra care to follow personal hygiene and other preventative measures as outlined in the [COVID19 information site](#).

If you have been advised to self-isolate by a physician or Ottawa Public Health, then follow these instructions. Employees must inform their manager and advise where the guidance to self-isolate originated from.

Employees may be expected to work from home. Each case will be decided upon on a case-by-case basis in consultation with your manager.

Q16. If an employee has to care for a family member who is sick does the employee receive compensation?

There are several types of leaves that employees can utilize and recognizing the current emergency status, the College may grant time over and above those outlined in the respective collective agreements and terms and conditions of employment. A new leave code is being created in Workday for this purpose. More information will be provided shortly.

Alternatively, where appropriate, arrangements may be made to work from home subject to the agreement of the immediate manager.

Part-time employees will receive compensation for the scheduled, but unworked, shifts after conversation with the immediate manager.

See also the Employment Standards Act and Employment Insurance for leave options.

Q17. When can an employee return to work if diagnosed with COVID-19?

The employee will be told by the health professional who made the diagnosis. Additionally, the College will be regularly providing updates to employees in terms of when employees can return to regular work at the campuses.

Any abuse of these special arrangements may result in disciplinary action.