

**Process Guidelines to Request Temporary Continuation of Telecommuting:**

**High Risk Employees, Vulnerable Family Member & Lack of Childcare**

Introduction:

Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance states that **adults age 65 and over and people of any age with certain serious underlying medical conditions** might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. In addition, the college is aware of employees who either have a vulnerable family member with a **serious underlying medical condition** within the household or who lack childcare during this public health emergency.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is reopening under a phased approached as established by the Governor’s Reopening Advisory Board. While the college has remained open, staffing on campus was significantly reduced and, as a result, the college will also be following a phased approach to return employees, while also ensuring alignment with the framework provided for the higher education sector.

The purpose of these Process Guidelines to Request Temporary Continued Telecommuting is to outline the appropriate process to follow should there be a need for an employee to request an extension of their telecommuting assignment as a result of being in a high-risk category identified by the CDC, having a vulnerable family member within the immediate household or having a lack of childcare. The college recognizes, however, that not all positions are feasible for telecommuting and the responsibilities of the position and operational needs of the college are among the various considerations to be discussed when deciding about a temporary telework request.

Underlying Medical Conditions:

Employees of any age who have a serious underlying medical condition(s) might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. The CDC lists underlying medical conditions as:

* Moderate to severe asthma
* Chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis
* Chronic lung disease
* Diabetes
* Hemoglobin disorders
* Immunocompromised
* Liver disease
* Being age 65 years and older
* Serious heart conditions
* Severe obesity

Employees with one of these medical conditions or other medical conditions or disabilities that may render them as high-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 may apply for a reasonable accommodation to continue telecommuting through Human Resources. They will need to supply appropriate medical documentation to support the request and to complete the ADA Request for Reasonable Accommodation Form and the ADA Accommodation Medical Certification Form. HR will dialogue with the employee’s area executive and supervisor about the effectiveness and feasibility of continued telecommuting for the type of position held.

Older Employees:

The CDC identifies older adults – people 65 years of age or older – as at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19. To reduce the risk of getting sick, social distancing and proper hygiene practices are recommended. In addition, the Governor’s Reopening Massachusetts in Phases plan encourages older employees to stay home, if possible. Telecommuting may be an alternate work option for older employees, if feasible. Employees who are 65 years of age or older who believe they need this alternate work option should complete and submit a Request for Temporary Telecommuting Continuation Form to Human Resources.

When assessing the request, HR will verify the age of the employee and will dialogue with the employee’s area executive and supervisor about the effectiveness and feasibility of continued telecommuting for the type of position held.

Lack of Childcare:

While the Commonwealth of Massachusetts proceeds through the phased reopening approach established by the Governor’s Reopening Advisory Board, childcare options for employees may be limited due to day care, school and camp closures as a result of COVID-19. Telecommuting may be an alternate work option for these employees, if feasible. Employees who do not have daycare should submit a Request for Temporary Telecommuting Continuation Form to Human Resources. When assessing the request, HR will verify the school, day care or camp closure and dialogue with the area executive and the supervisor about the effectiveness and feasibility of continued telecommuting for the type of position held.

Employees interested in learning more about Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) leave eligibility and/or other leave options should contact HR for assistance and see the information below under Short-Term Leave.

Vulnerable Family Member in the Immediate Household:

During this public health crisis, employees who have a vulnerable family member – a person who is considered high-risk per CDC guidelines as described above – living in their household may be eligible for telecommuting as a temporary alternate work option. Employees who believe they need this alternate work option should submit a Request for TemporaryTelecommuting Continuation Form to Human Resources, along with written certification from their health care provider that this immediate family member living in your household has a medical condition or a disability that makes them vulnerable to serious complications from COVID-19. Human Resources will dialogue with the area executive and the supervisor about the effectiveness and feasibility of continued telecommuting for the type of position held.

Employees who have a family member deemed vulnerable due to age are also eligible to request a temporary extension of their telecommuting assignment.

Short-Term Leave:

Not all positions are structured for or are conducive to remote work. For positions where a remote work option cannot be offered and an employee is unable to work due to at-home considerations, there may be short-term leave options available. FFCRA provides employees with the ability to take leave related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work, including unable to telework, for certain qualifying reasons. For more information about the qualifying reasons and eligibility, employees can view [FFCRA Employee Rights Poster](https://my.bridgew.edu/departments/HR/Documents/FFCRA_Poster_WH1422_Non-Federal1.pdf).

Employees interested in learning more about FFCRA leave eligibility and/or other leave options such as use of accrued, unused benefit time should contact Human Resources for assistance.

General Understandings:

When assessing requests for continued telework, the college must remain mindful of the volume of requests and the college’s ability to grant all requests. Telework is a temporary alternate work privilege being offered by the college during this public health crisis and there is no requirement that telework be offered or granted. Telecommuting privileges will be periodically assessed for continuation and can be cancelled at any time and for any reason by the college. Further, the college has the sole discretion to amend, modify or replace this Process to Request Temporary Continuation of Telecommuting at any time and for any reason.

Employees approved for a continued temporary telecommuting assignment must complete a written telecommuting workplan that is approved by their area executive and submitted it to Human Resources. Employees must comply with college rules, policies, practices, and instructions while telecommuting. Short-term telecommuting in extraordinary circumstances does not change the basic terms and conditions of employment. Interim telecommuting assignments do not change an employee's classification, compensation, or benefits. The policies applicable to leave and the use of accrued leave shall be applicable to all benefited employees, regardless of telecommuting privileges.

All injuries incurred by employees during the performance of official duties and during working hours must be reported promptly, and applicable Workers’ Compensation laws will apply. While telecommuting, employees are required to maintain a safe working environment.

Faculty Addendum:

**For MCLA faculty members seeking a provision to teach remotely for the Fall 2020 semester due to an underlying medical condition resulting in a high-risk classification, a vulnerable family member, or lack of childcare, please note that adherence to the below guidelines must be ensured in order for requests to be honored.**

1. **Completion of MCLA’s Online Training Course or OTC Refresher Course**. OTC is offered by the Center for Academic Technology and is afully online professional development experience geared to: redesign and fully reconstruct existing courses into an online format; learn and practice the skills unique to teaching and learning online; and use standards of accessibility, user experience, and digital literacies to build faculty readiness to reach students effectively in an online space.  The OTC curriculum and assignments are built around 11 learning outcomes across 2 categories, Online Pedagogical Skills and Technology Skills.

In the event that a faculty member is unable to complete the OTC or OTC Refresher, they may work individually with Academic Technology to design their online courses to ensure adherence to best practices in instructional design.

1. **Use of Canvas for all courses.** Appropriate andfrequent use of Canvas, MCLA’s learning management system is expected for a streamlined, consistent student experience.