Appendix B: Guide for Returning to Work

Introduction
MEC’s process for employees who return to work on campus is critical in maintaining the health and safety of the campus community during the COVID-19 pandemic. MEC adheres to all state and local regulations and follows strict protocols for employees who work in campus buildings. The College continues to revise its policies based on updated guidance and remains in close contact with health officials as the situation continues to evolve and new information becomes available.

Policy
It is of the utmost importance that employees work in a safe environment during the pandemic, and The College is implementing this policy to ensure the safest environment for its employees. This policy will remain in effect through the COVID-19 pandemic or until the administration has received guidance that it is safe to discontinue it. Any changes will be discussed with CUNY and communicated to the College community. This policy applies to all employees and visitors to campus. Employees must follow the guidelines below to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Personal Protective Equipment
All employees, including frontline and essential employees, must wear masks or face coverings while in public spaces, offices, and while interacting with others. The face covering must cover both the nose and mouth. The College will provide two masks to each employee. Employees, however, are permitted to wear their own masks as long as they meet the requirements above. Employees who work alone in their offices do not need to wear face coverings as long as they remain alone. If someone enters the office, the employee is expected to put on his or her mask. Employees working outside alone or in large open spaces alone do not need to wear a mask. However, a mask should be readily available and worn should a person arrive.

Training
All employees must complete the mandatory CUNY Return to Work COVID-19 Training and Attestation. This is a one-time requirement, and the training session is available on Blackboard. This must be completed in advance of arriving on campus. All employees reporting to work on campus will be required to complete a daily health screening via the Everbridge app.

Social Distancing
All employees must practice social distancing to the greatest extent possible. Social distancing is critical as we have learned that infectious individuals can be asymptomatic, meaning that they show no symptoms of COVID-19 but can still infect others. Social distancing is one of the best tools we have to protect each other. Be sure to follow these guidelines:

- Stay at least six feet (approximately two arms’ length) from others at all times. Employees are encouraged to remind individuals to maintain six feet of space;
- Do not gather in large groups. Employees should consider where they take their breaks;
- Employees who take breaks during the workday must do so while maintaining social distance requirements. Supervisors must work with their employees to stagger break times and ensure employees are not in a breakroom where social distance cannot be maintained;
- Stay out of crowded areas and avoid large mass gatherings.

The College understands that employees may not be able to complete their duties effectively while engaging in social distancing. In those instances, it is of the utmost importance that employees wear their face coverings.

Symptomatic Employees
Employees must monitor their symptoms. This monitoring should be done daily before reporting to work and during work hours. If an employee feels symptomatic per the CDC’s guidance, s/he must contact his/her
supervisor immediately as well as the Office of Human Resources. If an employee feels symptomatic during the course of the workday, s/he should safely isolate and immediately contact his/her supervisor and the Office of Human Resources. If an employee feels sick before the workday begins, s/he is highly encouraged to stay home. Employees should follow standard department time and attendance procedures. If an employee feels well enough to work and his/her position allows for productive telecommuting, the College may take this into consideration. In these instances, supervisors must work with the Office of Human Resources before adopting a short-term telecommuting option. Employees who are found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

Exceptions
If an employee cannot wear a face covering due to an underlying health condition, s/he should immediately contact the Office of Human Resources. Employees may be required to submit appropriate medical documentation to substantiate their underlying health conditions. Only the benefits manager or the executive director of Human Resources will review medical documentation. Employees should not submit medical documentation to their supervisors.

If an employee has an underlying health condition that may put him/her at greater risk, s/he must contact the assistant director or director of Human Resources to discuss accommodation. Employees may be required to submit appropriate medical documentation to substantiate their underlying health conditions. Only the assistant director or director of Human Resources will review medical documentation. Employees should not submit medical documentation to their supervisors.

Campus Contacts
- Employees who need additional assistance with how their offices and/or departments are configured, contact AVP for Facilities and Campus Planning Thomas Ching at tching@mec.cuny.edu;
- Employees who need additional training, either for themselves or their departments, contact Director of Environmental Health and Safety Mohamed Bangura at mbangura@mec.cuny.edu;
- Employees who need to discuss an underlying health condition, contact Executive Director of Human Resources Tanya E. Isaacs at teisaacs@mec.cuny.edu or HR Benefits Manager Kareema Monroe at kmonroe@mec.cuny.edu;
- Employees who need hand sanitizer or a new mask, contact Director of Environmental Health and Safety Mohamed Bangura at mbangura@mec.cuny.edu.

Preventing the Spread of COVID-19
The College recommends that employees follow the guidance below to assist in preventing the spread of COVID-19

Working in an Office Environment
The College understands that working in an office setting and maintaining social distance will be a challenge. Employees will need to keep at least six feet from co-workers. Remember, a face covering should be worn at all times when interacting with others. Departments should assess their own spaces and meeting rooms to institute measures to physically separate and increase the distance between each person. The following can be used as guidance.

Virtual Meetings: Gathering in groups increases the risk of spreading COVID-19. Face-to-face meetings are discouraged at this time, even within a department. Whenever possible, the College supports the continued use of virtual meeting platforms to reduce contact with other persons and assist in social distancing. Keep in mind that the College must comply with all local, state, and federal guidelines for in-person gatherings.

Personal Safety Practices
• **Washing Face Coverings:** The College recommends that employees wash all cloth face coverings in hot water each day after use. Since COVID-19 can live on surfaces, it is essential to wash face coverings as soon as possible each day after use.

• **Putting on Face Coverings:** The College recommends you wash your hands before placing your face covering on your face. Adjust the face covering to properly fit over your mouth and nose. If you have a face covering that is adjustable, make sure it is snug to your face. While wearing a face covering, you should avoid touching the outside of the mask at all times.

• **Taking off Face Coverings:** Do **NOT** touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when removing your face covering. You should remove the face covering by placing your finger in the loop around your ear and pull the strap away from your ear (or untie it, if applicable). Do not place a used mask on any surface. It would be best if you put it in a storage bag alone until proper washing can occur. Wash your hands immediately after removing your face covering.

• **Disposing of Face Coverings:** If you are wearing a disposable face covering, it should only be worn for one day and must be disposed of in the trash after use.

• **Temperature Checks:** Employees are encouraged to check their temperature before reporting to work each day. If an employee has a temperature equal to or higher than 100.0°F, s/he should contact his/her supervisor and the benefits manager or the executive director of Human Resources immediately.

• **Hand Hygiene:** Frequent and proper hand hygiene is critical to reducing the spread of COVID-19. Employees are encouraged to wash their hands frequently and always after touching high traffic surfaces (such as an elevator or doorknob). Employees should also wash their hands after sneezing or coughing. Employees should wash their hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, be sure to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% isopropyl alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

• **Coughing/Sneezing Hygiene:** If you are in a private setting and do not have a face covering on, remember to cough and/or sneeze into the inside of your elbow and not into your hands. Remember to wash your hands immediately with warm water and soap. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% isopropyl alcohol.

**Staffing Options**

• **Stagger Reporting/Departures:** Employees need to consider staggering their reporting and departure schedules to and from their office spaces. Often there is more density in shared areas at the beginning and the end of a workday.

• **Alternating Days:** Departments with more than one employee in the physical space may permit alternate workdays to reduce the density. For example, rotate the days and number of employees reporting to the office on a particular day. Supervisors must work with the executive director of Human Resources before implementing an alternate workday schedule and obtain the President's Council designee approval. Permission for alternate workdays is contingent on an approved statewide telecommuting program in place. Administration reserves the right to discontinue the use of alternate workdays with 48 hours’ notice.

• **Telecommuting:** Telecommuting plans may be considered if a department is alternating workdays as described above to reduce density in an office. The employee’s supervisor, President’s Council designee, and director of Human Resources must approve all telecommuting plans. Telecommuting will only be permitted while there is an approved statewide telecommuting program in place. Administration reserves the right to discontinue telecommuting plans with 48 hours’ notice.

**Personal Disinfection**

• **Personal Office Spaces:** Employees are encouraged to disinfect their workspaces, e.g., keyboards, mice, doorknobs, etc. Disinfecting the workspace should be completed before starting work and before leaving for the day. Supervisors will be responsible for reporting any disinfectants brought from home to Environmental Health and Safety before use. Supervisor must ensure that employees are using appropriate and safe disinfectants to clean their workstations. Employees may reach out to Environmental Health and
Safety for proper disinfecting procedures. The College also recommends that employees not store any non-essential items on their desks.

- **Shared Office Equipment:** There are many shared pieces of office equipment. Departments are encouraged to disinfect shared office equipment regularly throughout the day. Examples include copy machines, fax machines, and cabinets.

- **Restrooms:** Use of a particular restroom should be limited to ensure that social distance can be maintained. Employees should wash their hands after using the restroom, as detailed in the hand hygiene section of this guide.

- **Tight Spaces:** The College recommends that if employees are in an area like a stairwell or hallway where social distance cannot be maintained, they stop and turn their backs to allow the person to pass.

- **Elevators:** Employees are encouraged to use the stairs whenever possible. However, the College understands that it may not always be possible to do so. If an employee uses an elevator, no more than one person may enter an elevator at one time, if the elevator is small. While on the elevator, everyone must wear face coverings. Avoid touching buttons with exposed hands or fingers, if possible. Wash your hands upon departing the elevator or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

**Resources**
- CUNY guide on [What You Need to Know about COVID-19](#).