COVID-19 Related Furlough FAQs

University of Utah Employees impacted by a COVID-19 Related Furlough are encouraged to contact the UHRM Employee Solution Center at 801-581-7447, for further information and guidance.

Below are several Frequently Asked Questions:

Will I be eligible for Unemployment benefits while I am on furlough?

Employees subject to furloughs should apply for Unemployment Benefits when the furlough becomes effective. Unemployment information can be found at: https://jobs.utah.gov/ui/home.

The Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) also offers a virtual workshop for employees. Information can be found at https://jobs.utah.gov/covid19/templayoffvirtualworkshop.pdf.

What happens to my health care coverage while I am furloughed?

During a furlough, your department will pay the full cost of your health coverage if you are unpaid for an entire paycheck. If you receive pay for working during a pay period, you will pay the employee portion of the coverage.

What happens to my FSA while I am furloughed?

Beginning an unpaid leave is an event that will allow you to cancel your FSA election. However, if you wish to continue using your health FSA account for eligible expenses incurred during your furlough, you may pay the amount that would otherwise be deducted from your paycheck each month through billing. If you are on a rotating furlough and will be working intermittently, FSA deferrals will be divided over your remaining paychecks.

What will happen to life and disability insurance while I am furloughed?

You may choose to continue life insurance, disability insurance and other voluntary benefits by paying premiums through billing. Please notify UHRM if you would like to be set up on billing. If you are on a rotating furlough and will be working intermittently, premiums can be deducted from paycheck you receive during your work periods.

Will there be an impact on my retirement?

Yes. You will not receive employer contributions on unpaid leave time. If you are enrolled in a Utah Retirement Systems Plan, you will not receive years of service credit for any unpaid time in excess of ten days.

Am I still eligible for tuition reduction for myself and eligible family members while on furlough?

If you are in a full-time benefit-eligible position and have met the waiting periods, you are still eligible to receive tuition reduction for yourself and any eligible dependents who meet the eligibility
rules in University policy. The furlough will not count as a break in service that will require restarting waiting periods.

Can I withdraw from my retirement accounts while I am on furlough?

Because a furlough is an unpaid leave of absence and you are still considered an active University employee, you cannot withdraw from your University retirement accounts. However, if you are age 59 ½ or older, you can withdraw from your 403(b) Plan account. As an active employee, you are eligible to take loans on money you have deferred to your 403(b) and/or 457(b) Plan accounts. As a result of the CARES Act, you can request deferral of loan payments for up to one year.

Can I work another job outside of the University while on a furlough?

Yes; however, the same conflict of interest rules apply to furloughed employees that apply to all other employees. The outside employment cannot interfere with the performance of your job or the interests of the University. You must receive approval from your director/dean and sign a conflict of interest form before engaging in outside employment. The University will still be considered your primary employer and you will be expected to return to work when called upon by university management.

Can I volunteer to do my job?

No. The Federal Labor Standards Act does not allow employees to volunteer without compensation to do the same work for which they are employed.

Can I transfer to a position that is not being furloughed in order to continue to work and be paid?

The University may be able to assign you to another University position when possible/practicable based on our best efforts to match departmental needs with available employees. Please fill out questionnaire here: http://coronavirus.utah.edu/employee-response-support

Will I continue to accrue leave while on furlough?

No, you will not continue to accrue vacation, sick and personal preference while on furlough.

Can I use vacation, sick or personal preference during a furlough?

No. The reason for the furlough is the department’s inability to fund compensation. As a result, employees who have been furloughed cannot use vacation, sick or other leave to continue receiving pay during the furlough.

Will I receive holiday pay during my furlough?

If you work during the week of a holiday, you will receive holiday pay. If your furlough covers the entire week of the holiday, you will not receive holiday pay.

What if I am furloughed while on leave (such as FMLA, vacation etc.)

If you are furloughed while on an approved leave, your approved leave ends immediately and you are placed on furlough leave instead. Days that you are furloughed will not count towards your 12-week FMLA leave entitlement.
If I am injured during while on furlough will I be eligible for workers compensation?

No, workers compensation is paid to employees only if they are injured while performing their duties and on the job.

How will the furlough impact my service date with the university?

There will be no impact to your service date with the University of Utah. The furlough time will continue to count as years of service toward vacation accruals and years of service awards.

If I am furloughed, when will I be expected to return to work?

Every employee’s situation may be different. Colleges/Departments can expect employees to return to work as soon as possible, taking into account an employee’s specific situation while on a furlough. After a furloughed employee has been notified to return to work, they are expected to contact their supervisor within 48 hours of being notified.

COVID-19 Related Furlough Procedures and FAQ’s also posted here: https://www.hr.utah.edu/coronavirus/