



**Administrative Guidelines for Offices  
on the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)  
pandemic**

**Framework for the management of staff members in  
United Nations Common System Headquarters and Field  
Duty Stations**

**CEB Human Resources Network  
Version 6.0  
5 August 2021**

# Administrative Guidelines for Offices on the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Pandemic

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## INTRODUCTION

### Rationale for the Guidelines

On 30 January 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a “public health emergency of international concern”. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO), Director-General characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic. This unprecedented global public health crisis has and continues to require significant adjustments to the operations of the UN Common System organizations worldwide.

These guidelines are intended for Executive Heads<sup>1</sup>, Heads of Entities<sup>2</sup> and administrative staff, including human resources, who oversee the administrative arrangements of staff members and their recognized family members in the UN Common System organizations worldwide. They do not replace the applicable Staff Regulations and Rules and the relevant administrative issuances of the organizations which, in case of conflict with the provisions in these guidelines, shall prevail.

These guidelines have been prepared to facilitate a harmonized approach on the most important aspects of administering staff members during the COVID-19 pandemic and are meant to provide information applicable to all staff members serving in the UN Common System organizations. They are not applicable to non-staff personnel who may be covered by internal guidance issued by each organization.

It is recognized that not all the provisions of the Guidelines may be applicable to all duty stations, especially where they need to consider the provisions of national authorities, for example permits and visas. Therefore, organizations at each duty station are encouraged to adapt the provisions to their local requirements as necessary.

All UN Country Team members are expected to implement the provisions of these guidelines.<sup>3</sup>

These guidelines will be reviewed periodically, as necessary, by the Chief Executive Board (CEB) Human Resources Network and revised accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> Executives Heads are Heads of organizations of the UN common system.

<sup>2</sup> “Head of entity” means the head of a department or an office, including an office away from Headquarters; the head of a special political or peacekeeping mission; the head of a regional commission; a resident or regional coordinator; or the head of any other unit tasked with programmed activities.

<sup>3</sup> Guidelines and provisions that differ from organization to organization at the same duty station should be carefully reviewed as they would lead to difficulties and further disruption at a time of a crisis.

## I. General

1. Conditions, workplace setting and dynamic of the pandemic vary from duty station to duty station. Therefore, different duty stations are currently in different scenarios in relation to working arrangements and remote work. Given the evolving nature of the pandemic, the transition from one scenario to another may not be linear and the heads of entity may decide at any time to revert to a previous scenario.

### Scenario 1: Physical closure of offices

2. In duty station where the pandemic circumstances degrade rapidly, UN headquarters offices may be physically closed by the Secretary-General or the Executive Head of the relevant organization, following coordination with all UN Common system organizations with a presence at the duty station. The Resident Coordinator, guided by WHO and following consultation with the UN Country Team, may decide on the physical closure of the country office or offices when deemed necessary and, if so, will notify the host government and local authorities. UN offices may also be physically closed following instruction of the host government. For the purpose of ensuring continuity of operations, UN offices will normally remain open virtually during a full or partial physical closure. In such instance, staff members are requested to work remotely from an alternative site, normally their residence at the duty station.

### Scenario 2: Restricted on-site presence

3. When the situation improves, a limited physical return to the workplace may become possible. Conditions, workplace setting and dynamic of the pandemic vary from duty station to duty station. In this context, organizations may develop local plans for a gradual (i.e. phased) return of UN personnel to the duty station and/or to the workplace, which must take into account the WHO and local host country authorities' guidance and regulations where applicable, as well as local operational needs. As risk mitigation measures such as maximum occupancy limits would be in place, staff members are grouped into different categories based on the nature of their functions:
  - a) **Staff whose on-site presence is required/authorized:** staff members who are required to perform on-site functions for business continuity purpose in the event of a physical closure of offices for normal operations or when occupancy limits are in place due to COVID-19.
  - b) **Staff whose on-site presence is not required:** staff members who can perform their functions remotely (i.e. telecommute/telework)
4. Building occupancy limits should be determined for each phase of the plan. and daily entry counts should be monitored to not exceed those limits. Maximum safe occupancy levels should be set taking into account physical/social distancing requirements and building and office layouts, congestion points such as entry/exit and elevators.

5. Executive Heads and Heads of Entities, as applicable, should designate staff whose on-site presence is required to perform functions that cannot be performed remotely such as but not limited to security, maintenance, cleaning, medical and staff involved in responding to COVID-19. Staff members whose onsite presence is not required but prefer to perform their functions in the UN premises as a matter of personal preference - for example to access equipment or a quiet environment - should also be authorized to do so subject to applicable occupancy limits.
6. To the extent possible, staff whose on-site presence is required should be designated on a voluntary basis. In cases where the number of volunteers is insufficient to guarantee the continued operation during a full or partial physical closure of office, the official with delegated authority may designate additional staff members to physically report to the premises for duty.
7. Staff members whose on-site presence is required either daily or on a rotational basis must be notified and informed of the implications (e.g. no possibility to telecommute outside the duty station). Staff whose on-site presence is required or authorized may be required to submit to the Medical Service, prior to or upon reporting physically to the premises, information about their health either through a statement or a form provided for this purpose (e.g. upon entering a building, staff members may be required to certifying that they do not have symptoms consistent with Covid-19, or tested positive in the last 10 days).

Executives Heads and Heads of Entities, as applicable should ensure that staff required to perform on-site functions have delegated decision making/signing authority, if applicable.

8. In order to address the needs of the UN Common System organizations in response to COVID-19, Executive Heads and Heads of Entities, as applicable, may request staff members to temporarily carry out different daily functions than the ones normally assigned to them. To ensure continued productive use of time, staff members may also be required to undertake online training or attend learning events. The aforementioned changes in functions should be commensurate with the level and qualification of the staff member concerned and properly documented to mitigate any potential risk when implementing performance management policies.

### **Scenario 3: Transition to a return to the workplace**

9. In duty stations where the conditions allow for it, the physical return of UN staff members to the duty station and/or to the workplace should be based on a phased, flexible, and people-centered approach. The primary consideration should be to ensure all necessary measures are in place for mandate implementation, while also prioritizing the health, safety, security and well-being of UN staff members, and their families, for carrying out the functions and responsibilities entrusted to them.
10. The progressive physical return to the duty station and/or workplace is not to be confused with the initiative undertaken by the CEB taskforce on the Future of Work which is a long-term and far-reaching endeavor.
11. The return-to-workplace/office plans should focus on the transition from remote working on a full-time basis to regular on-site presence for all staff members, not only for those whose functions cannot be performed remotely. Depending on the situation at the duty station and based on local requirements, all staff members may be required to return to the UN premises one day or more per week.

12. When developing their local plan for a gradual return of UN staff members to the duty station and/or to the workplace, WHO and local host country authorities' guidance and regulations should be taken into account, as well as local operational needs.
13. Rotation and shifts may be introduced to maximize onsite presence within the daily maximum occupancy limits. Managers should continue to exercise flexibility, understanding and care when scheduling the physical return to the premises of their teams. Managers should carefully evaluate whether the presence of non-staff personnel is required on the UN premises/at the duty station, such as interns, volunteers and consultants. If it is determined that remote working is still feasible, managers should evaluate on a case-by-case basis whether return to the duty station/workplace is required.
14. In application of the principle of "reasonable accommodation", staff members may, request a deferment of their return date for medical or other compelling reasons, according to applicable policies and guidance of each organization.
15. In the context of an increased on-site presence and as a result of hybrid teams, managers should continue to promote an inclusive environment, including by ensuring that all staff members have equal access to information needed to carry out their functions and can participate in meetings regardless of whether they are on-site or working remotely. For instance, when having impromptu meetings or discussions in the office, managers and other team members should make sure to include the colleagues who work from home. Similarly, informal knowledge and information sharing should include all team members for whom it would be relevant, regardless of whether they are present in the office or working from home. Teams should continue to leverage online collaboration tools (e.g. Zoom, Teams, SharePoint) that they have been using over the past year to ensure inclusiveness.
16. On return to the workplace, staff should expect a different work environment due to the implementation of COVID-19 related protective measures. Physical distancing and other safety mitigating measures, such as the requirement to wear a face covering, have proven largely effective and should remain in effect for as long as needed to support the safety and health of all UN staff members irrespective of their vaccination status.
17. Communication and information plans should be established to facilitate adherence to protective measures. Regular updates and reminders should take place in order to ensure compliance.
18. UN staff members must at all times follow the required measures to prevent the spread of the disease and adhere to established sanitary protocols, as well as those concerning presence at, use of, and circulation through, the premises.
19. Staff members with symptoms, who are unwell or are in contact with individuals who have shown symptoms must be instructed to stay home.
20. At the workplace, staff members who feel unwell with COVID-19 or other symptoms such as fever, cough, sneezing, or difficulty breathing, should be advised to leave the premises and seek medical care. In an emergency, they or a bystander is to notify the relevant services as per the established protocol for emergencies (e.g. alert security which in turn will coordinate with medical services).

## Vaccination

21. All UN staff members and their family members are **strongly encouraged** to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Staff members are encouraged to report their COVID-19 vaccination status as per the policies and systems in place in their organization. This information will be helpful for planning purposes.
22. The UN has worked closely with Member States to ensure the inclusion of UN personnel and their dependents in the national programs of their host countries. UN personnel eligible to receive WHO approved COVID-19 vaccine through their host country's national vaccination program are strongly encouraged to use this opportunity.
23. However, in some cases, vaccination of UN personnel and their dependents will not be possible through the host country. In locations where there are no national COVID-19 vaccination programmes and where UN personnel may not have access to COVID-19 vaccine, or to a WHO approved COVID-19 vaccine, the United Nations, through the Department of Operational Support (DOS) of the United Nations Secretariat, has put in place alternative arrangements to ensure that such personnel and their eligible family members can be vaccinated through a UN System-wide COVID-19 vaccination programme.
24. The UN System-wide COVID-19 vaccination programme intends to support the following categories of individuals serving/residing in duty stations where the vaccination programme is carried out:
  - a) UN System<sup>4</sup> personnel:
    - i. Staff members<sup>5</sup>
    - ii. UN Volunteers,
    - iii. Interns,
    - iv. Consultants and Individual Contractors, and
    - v. Other personnel holding a direct UN contract<sup>6</sup>;
  - b) Eligible family members: spouses/partners and dependent children recognized under the staff regulations and rules of the respective UN system organizations, who are authorized to reside at the duty station with the staff member or who reside at a location where the UN is running a vaccination campaign.
  - c) Accompanying eligible family members of non-staff personnel as defined by the UN system organizations' staff regulations and rules and policies, who are authorized to reside at the duty station with such personnel or who reside at a location where the UN is running a vaccination campaign.
  - d) Military and police personnel deployed by the United Nations and accompanying eligible dependents (including troops of AMISOM)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will govern the arrangements amongst participating organizations. Participating UN System entities will include the signatories of the MOU.

<sup>5</sup> Including Junior Professional Officers (Associate Experts); technical cooperation experts on non-reimbursable loans; and personnel provided to the organizations by governments or other entities responsible for the remuneration of their services

<sup>6</sup> For example, UN personnel holding a service contract

<sup>7</sup> More details on uniformed personnel are included in the Group of Friends recommendations, which discusses both in-theatre vaccination and pre-deployment considerations.



- e) UN System Retirees in receipt of a pension benefit from the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) or from the IMF Staff Retirement Plan (SRP), or the World Bank SRP who have established their normal place of residence in a country where the UN System-wide COVID-19 Vaccination Programme is carried out.
  - f) All personnel of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) that are engaged by UN system organizations in the implementation of their respective mandates, and the accompanying dependents of those international INGO personnel, provided they are sponsored and validated by a participating UN organization.
  - g) Personnel of key institutional contractors<sup>8</sup> providing support in the countries concerned.
25. For updated information of the UN System-wide covid-19 Vaccination programme, please visit [UN System-wide covid-19 Vaccination programme webpage](#).
26. Staff members may decide to travel to their home country to avail of national COVID-19 vaccination programmes, bearing the responsibility of the cost of transportation or taking advantage of entitlement travel, if eligible. In such instances and if compatible with the nature of their functions staff members may request to telecommute outside of the duty station following applicable organizational policies for the time necessary to complete the vaccination (e.g. when two doses are required), subject to approval of their manager. Taking into consideration the rationale for the entitlement and the requirement to spend no less than seven calendar days in the country of destination, staff members utilizing their home leave or family visit entitlement to travel away from the duty station will be required to use a minimum of five days of annual leave during their stay in the place of home leave or family visit travel. If telecommuting is not feasible due to the nature of their functions, staff members shall use their existing leave entitlements for any absence from the duty station.

### **Information for staff and queries**

27. UN system staff members and their families may find:
- the latest information related to COVID-19 at:  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
  - COVID-19 situation reports at:  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>
  - Latest available information on travel restrictions, please refer to this link from IATA<sup>9</sup>:  
<https://www.iatatravelcentre.com/international-travel-document-news/1580226297.htm>

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<sup>8</sup> Examples of Key Institutional Contractors may include those providing aviation services, key life support functions (e.g. food and fuel) and security. Personnel of such contractors must be validated by a sponsoring UN Organization

<sup>9</sup> Please be advised that this information is only as reported to IATA by the countries and may not reflect the absolute latest information. Therefore, travelers should still ensure that they check with the relevant authorities for any countries they plan to travel to and ensure that they would not face any issues as it relates to their specific situation.

28. For further information, staff members at the duty station may contact:

Insert contact details of medical services, executive officers, etc. of all organizations at the duty station

## II. Mental health

29. These are difficult times for all UN personnel, who have faced challenging times and uncertainty throughout the pandemic. Uncertainty, social isolation, fear for family, friends and self, as well as long working hours under stressful conditions may cause and/or exacerbate anxiety and other mental health conditions. Grief and loss may also be an issue for many staff members. In addition, many staff members are juggling additional caring responsibilities, such as care for children who are remote learning or for ageing parents. The impact of the pandemic on mental health and well-being is likely to be felt for some time to come and needs to be considered. There are likely to be additional stressors as personnel adjust to returning to the office and to other changes to their working and personal lives. Mental health concerns are expected to be prolonged based on research from previous pandemics.
30. All UN Common System organizations are advised to be mindful of the impact of the pandemic on mental health and consider what actions they can take to support the mental health and well-being of their staff at this time.
31. Improving the wellbeing of our workforce and investing in a mentally healthy workplace will reap many benefits for individuals, teams and the whole organization. Good mental health and wellbeing positively impacts on resilience and productivity of individuals, teams and the organization. Good mental health can also mean that organizations can achieve reductions in financial costs of sickness, turnover, poor productivity, incivility, employee claims and benefits.
32. The UN Common System has a Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy with the key objective of increasing staff member resilience, productivity and engagement. More details can be found at:  
<https://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce/files/Strategy%20-%20full.pdf>
33. Actions, which UN Common System organizations could take at this time, are:
- a) **Flexibility:** Maximize flexibility where possible. This could include lifting core hours when staff need to balance additional care needs, taking a favourable view to leave requests or ensuring meetings are not booked over the lunch period. Operationalization of the flexibility will vary depending on the duty station and work requirements.
  - b) **Communication:** Communicating clearly and transparently is critical at this time. Be aware that some staff may be socially isolated so ensure strategies are in place to maintain contact.
  - c) **Sick Leave:** Sick leave, including uncertified sick leave, can be used for mental health reasons. It is important that staff members are aware of this.
  - d) **Stigma and discrimination:** Many staff experience mental health conditions. There should be no stigma associated with this. Organizations are encouraged to put in place measures to ensure that staff with a mental health condition are not discriminated against.
  - e) **Psychosocial support:** Ensure psychosocial support is available to staff. This can be through internal Staff and Stress Counsellors, insurance schemes and/or external providers. This should be made available as a tele-counselling service when face-to-face sessions are not possible.
  - f) **Surge capacity:** Organizations should ensure that essential functions are adequately staffed.

### III. Leave and attendance

#### Working arrangements

34. For the purpose of this guidance, telecommuting refers to a method of organizing and carrying out work using information and communication technology that allows staff to perform their duties outside the workplace whether from within or outside the duty station. Telecommuting may also be referred to as including (but not limited to), teleworking, or remote working or any other term that an organization may use. In the context of COVID-19, in duty stations where offices remain physically open or progressively reopen, an increased use of telecommuting may be considered in order to reduce staff footprint in UN premises and/or in duty stations, as applicable. Staff members may be authorized to telecommute on a full-time basis at the duty station or away from their duty station regardless of their category in accordance with organizations' internal policies. Although flexible working arrangements, such as telecommuting, should be implemented at no cost to the organizations, staff members may be authorized to utilize their home leave / family visit / reverse education grant travel entitlement to travel to their home country or an alternate place of home leave, if eligible under conditions established by their respective organizations.
35. Alternate working arrangements are implemented at the request of the organization. The authority to implement alternate working arrangements rests with the Secretary-General and the Executive Heads of the organizations, in consultation with the Designated Official for Security. During alternate working arrangements, staff members whose on-site presence is not required may be authorized to work remotely away from the duty station under conditions established by their respective organizations.
36. In an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19, the Secretary-General and Executive Heads or Heads of Entities (if delegated such authority) in duty stations across the world may decide to restrict physical access to UN premises while keeping offices open virtually. In all entities at all duty stations where such decisions are made, staff members are required to work remotely, unless their physical presence on the premises is necessary. This is neither an optional nor a voluntary telecommuting arrangement between managers and staff members but a mandatory requirement by the organization.
37. Staff members who are authorized to telecommute away from their duty station should:
  - a) update their security clearance profiles whether they arrived at the location on personal or official travel (see section below on Travel on official business). This will ensure that staff remain informed of security updates and supported by local security arrangements;
  - b) ensure that information related to their visa and passport is up to date in the relevant applications and systems;
  - c) be aware of the fact that enrolment in medical insurance plans are normally made based on their duty station so medical expenses in a different location, like outside the country of the duty station may result in out-of-pocket medical expenses;
  - d) understand that the payment of any benefits and entitlements that require physical presence at their official duty station (e.g. danger pay), or that are related to their place of service/residence (e.g. expatriate benefits) may be affected for the period that they are outside of their official duty station, in accordance with their organizations' internal policies.

38. Regular communication on the above, reminding staff members of their obligations may be considered to support compliance and understanding of the applicable policies.
39. As part of a progressive re-opening of physical offices or other operational or organizational considerations, the Secretary-General and Executive Heads or Heads of Entities (if delegated such authority) may decide to discontinue alternate working arrangements outside the duty station and require staff members to come back to the duty station even though they may not all be required to resume on-site presence, and AWA at the duty station may continue. When such a decision is made, the expected return date should be communicated to staff members who should be provided with reasonable advance notice before they are expected to return to enable them to make necessary arrangements to physically report to the workplace/duty station taking into consideration any applicable travel restrictions and quarantine requirements. This requirement does not apply to duty stations where scenario 1 b) of the Human Resources Network's Standing Committee on Field Duty Stations guidance note for R and R duty stations with COVID-19 travel restrictions dated 1 June 2020 is implemented, since rotation is carried out on a pre-established schedule.
40. Core working hours may be lifted to support greater flexibility and when feasible, enable staff members to organize their daily schedule in a way that is compatible with their private responsibilities resulting from disruption to family support services such as school and day-care closure or adjustments to normal operations. Managers should be encouraged to exercise maximum flexibility. Staff members are expected to demonstrate professionalism and deliver on their assigned tasks.

### Overtime and night differential

41. **When offices are open virtually during a full or partial physical closure.** Policies on compensation for overtime, either compensatory time off (CTO) or remuneration, continue to apply during the physical closure of offices and suspension of core working hours, where applicable. Consequently, time actually worked in excess of the scheduled workday or scheduled work week may be compensated under the applicable conditions in accordance with organizations' internal policies, regardless of whether staff members perform their functions on site or remotely.
42. Similarly, in accordance with organizations' internal policies, staff members who are assigned to regularly scheduled night-time hours of work should continue to receive a night differential if they are required to perform work during night hours (as per the workday applicable to their duty station) including during a period of physical closure and while working remotely.

### Attendance

43. **When offices are open virtually during a full or partial physical closure.** At the request of the organization, staff members may be required to work remotely from an alternative work site, normally their residence at the duty station. Staff members whose on-site presence or presence at the duty station is not required may be authorized to work remotely from outside their duty station under the conditions established by their respective organization. Executive Heads and Heads of entities shall to the extent possible, provide staff members with the necessary equipment to discharge their official functions from an alternative work site, including from their residence at the duty station.

44. As a last resort, staff members who are unable to telecommute due to the nature of the functions may be placed on special leave with full pay (SLWFP) for a limited period of time, until an alternate solution is found. These staff members will not be required to exhaust annual leave before being placed on SLWFP.
45. **When offices are physically re-opened with no access restrictions, i.e. no occupancy limits.** All staff members are required to physically report for duty. Flexible working arrangements may however be authorized for staff whose on-site presence is not required to limit the possible exposure to COVID-19. Unauthorized absence will be dealt with in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules and the organizations' internal policies.

## Annual leave

46. While travel may not be possible for many given the constraints of the current situation, the purpose of taking annual leave is to take time off in order to benefit from rest and maintain mental health and well-being. It is crucial that staff members take such time off in order to benefit from rest periods and maintain their well-being. Managers are invited to exercise flexibility in authorizing annual leave and should also encourage their staff to avail of annual leave. It should be noted that the approval of annual leave is not linked to the nature of the functions performed by a staff member and managers must ensure the necessary conditions for all team members to be able to avail of their annual leave entitlement.
47. Staff members who travel outside the duty station during annual leave must be aware that, departure from the countries to which they travel or re-entry into the duty station may not be possible or may be delayed due to reasons such as flight cancellation, results of COVID-19 tests or isolation/quarantine requirements. When staff members are unable to return:
- a) at their request, staff members may be authorized to carry out their duties on a telecommuting/remote working basis outside of the duty station. No daily subsistence allowance (DSA) will be payable;
  - b) at their request and if possible, staff members may report to duty at a UN system office in the travel destination. No DSA will be payable;
  - c) if possible, the staff member may report for duty at a UN system office in another location. Travel to the location and DSA will be payable; *or*
  - d) if neither option a), b) or c) is possible, the staff member may be required to take annual leave, advance annual leave or special leave without pay. In exceptional circumstances, SLWFP may be granted until such time at the staff member is able to return for a limited period of time on a case-by-case basis (for example, a staff member who has exhausted all annual leave balance and who initiated travel before travel restrictions were put in place).
48. Managers are also encouraged to favorably consider requests for telecommuting outside of the duty station when in conjunction with leave requests (for instance during quarantine period upon arrival at the location of leave, if required by the local authorities) whenever possible and compatible with exigencies of service and in line with the organization's internal policies.
49. **Carry-over of annual leave:** A general exception to established policies on annual leave may be authorized to allow staff members to carry forward annual leave in excess of the maximum allowed beyond the regular leave cycle. Should staff members separate from service, any payment of annual leave that may be due

shall not however exceed the maximum allowed under the applicable Staff Regulations and Rules. When an exception has already been granted for the previous cycle, it is recommended to limit any further exception either in time or scope - such as a limit on the excess balance that can be carried forward - to incentivize staff members to take time off in order to rest and maintain their well-being although travel may not be possible.

### **Home leave entitlement**

50. In light of the travel restrictions imposed by most countries in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19, additional flexibility may be granted by Executive Heads with regards to the conditions applicable to home leave entitlement. For instance, organizations using a home leave point system may approve an exception whereby staff members continue to accrue home leave points beyond the limit normally applicable, for a limited period

### **Maternity, paternity and adoption leave**

51. While maternity, paternity and adoption leave entitlements continue to be administered according to applicable policies, organizations may grant an exception to account for the possible challenges posed by travel restrictions, for example allowing staff members to avail of paternity leave within an extended period beyond one year following the birth of a child.

### **Special leave without pay**

52. Placement on special leave without pay will follow applicable organization policy. Managers are encouraged to favorably consider requests for special leave without pay whenever feasible.

### **Sick leave, inability to perform duties and reporting COVID-19 cases**

53. If a staff member has been in contact with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case, staff/family members must immediately notify their supporting medical service.

54. Staff members are encouraged to make use of the telehealth solutions offered by their medical insurance plan.

55. **Uncertified sick leave.** To relieve the pressure on health care providers and provide staff members additional flexibility to manage COVID-19 related situations without having to visit a hospital or a doctor's office, additional days of uncertified sick leave may be approved for COVID-19 related absence. This would not result in an increase in the applicable overall sick leave entitlement. If used, the uncertified sick leave days will be deducted from the applicable overall sick leave entitlement.

56. **Certified sick leave.** Staff members who are unable to physically report for duty

because of illness, and in particular staff members with flu-like symptoms including for COVID-19, should not report for duty and should seek appropriate medical attention. Such absences will be recorded as sick leave in accordance with the applicable organizations' policies; or

57. Staff members who are unable to physically report for duty:

- a) **because of underlying health conditions**, on the recommendation of the medical service will be authorized to telecommute on a full-time basis for the duration indicated by the medical service, in accordance with organization's internal policies. If telecommuting is not possible due to the nature of the functions – for example if on-site presence is required to carry out functions - and no alternative functions, including completion of online learning, can be identified, staff members may be placed on special leave with full pay. for a limited duration as a last resort. Staff members will not be placed on sick leave.
- b) **because of isolation<sup>10</sup>** on the recommendation of the medical service or at the request of local authorities, staff members will be placed on sick leave if they cannot perform their functions because they are sick. Staff members who feel well enough to work while in isolation, may telecommute full-time if their functions are compatible with telecommuting or if they can perform alternative functions or complete online learning during this period.
- c) **because of quarantine<sup>11</sup>** on the recommendation of the medical service or at the request of local authorities, will be authorized to telecommute on a full-time basis for the duration of the quarantine. If telecommuting is not possible due to the nature of the functions – for example on-site presence is required to carry out functions - and no alternative functions, including completion of online learning can be identified, staff members may be placed on special leave with full pay as a last resort during this period.

## Medical evacuation

58. Medical evacuation of staff members and their eligible family members may be authorized under the applicable provisions. Relevant information can be found at:

<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/reference-documents-administrators-and-managers>

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<sup>10</sup> In medical terms isolation refers to confinement of a person who is sick, while quarantine refers to a person who is well and free of symptoms but must be confined in order to reduce risk.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid



## IV. Travel

59. Staff members who are working remotely or stranded at a location outside of their official duty station must update their security clearance profiles whether they arrived at the location on personal or official travel. This will ensure that they remain informed of security updates and are supported by local security arrangements. Where possible, staff members should download any travel advisory apps offered by the organizations and enable geolocation and notifications on their phones.
60. For purposes of information, the link below prepared and maintained by the World Food Programme shows world travel restrictions. It is available to all and is interactive and updated regularly.

<http://unwfp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/db5b5df309ac4f10bfd36145a6f8880e>

### Official business travel

61. **Planned travel.** The decision as to whether to travel to or from a duty station should be made in accordance with national travel advisories of the host country, taking into consideration WHO guidance. This should be in conjunction with the local Senior Crisis Management Structure relevant to the duty station.
62. Planned travel on official business to or from a duty station that has not been initiated and which is considered non-critical may be deferred. Travel on official business to or from a duty station should be planned and authorized in accordance with the needs of the organization as determined by the Head of Entity in line with security measures in place.
63. Alternative methods, such as virtual meetings, video/audio conferences...etc. are encouraged in lieu of official business travel to the greatest extent possible.
64. **Initiated travel.** In the event that the authorized itinerary must be changed for reasons related to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the following will apply:

- a) **Departure from official business destination not possible.** If during the authorized travel on official business, local authorities or UN guidelines do not allow departure, DSA will remain payable until departure is authorized and up until the first available flight.
- b) **Re-entry into duty station not possible.** If authorities at the duty station or UN guidelines do not allow re-entry, DSA will continue to be payable until re-entry to the duty station is possible and up until the first available flight.

Where required due to operational and/or medical reasons, staff members travelling on official business could be sent to an alternative location. DSA for that location will be payable.

- c) **Staff member falls sick.** If a staff member falls sick while on travel on official business, including with COVID-19, DSA, if applicable, would continue to be payable. .
- d) **Staff member is quarantined.** If a staff member is quarantined while on official business, DSA will remain payable under the same conditions as c) above.

- e) **Staff member dies.** In the unfortunate event that a staff member dies while on travel on official business, DSA will stop as from the date of death. The UN System office where the staff member was working (or the nearest UN/UNDP office) will assume the responsibility for coordinating the actions required and serve as the link between the parent office and the family or designated legal representative of the deceased, providing the necessary assistance throughout the period following the death.

### Home leave travel and family visit travel

- 65. Flexibility should be exercised to authorize advance and deferred home leave (HL) and family visit (FV), and to allow separate HL travel of staff members and eligible family members. Flexibility should also be granted to exercise HL/FV at an alternate location when such possibility is foreseen in the organization's policy framework, if local authorities of the HL/FV country do not authorize entry or medical facilities are not adequate, and subject to the maximum cost of travel from the official duty station to the recognized place of HL/FV.
- 66. Staff members must comply with local authorities' requirements and be aware that departure from the HL/FV destination or re-entry into the official duty station may not be possible or may be delayed (due to reasons such as flight cancellation, results of COVID-19 tests or quarantine requirements). In such cases, staff members should take this into consideration when accepting the lump sum option, as in such cases they agree to waive all entitlements relating to HL and FV travel that would otherwise have been payable, e.g. there shall be no reimbursement of lost tickets when the staff member has availed of the lump sum option. Staff members are encouraged to purchase travel insurance when travelling under the lump sum option. When the organization purchases the tickets for HL and FV travel, the organization assumes the liability for changes in itinerary due to travel restrictions.
- 67. When staff members are unable to depart from the HL/FV destination and to return to the official duty station, and they are not sick with COVID-19:
  - a) if feasible, at their request, staff members may be authorized to carry out their duties on a telecommuting basis outside of the duty station. No DSA will be payable;
  - b) if possible, at their request, staff members may report to duty at a UN office in the same HL/FV location. No DSA will be payable;
  - c) if possible, they may be required to report to duty at a UN office in another location. Travel to the location and DSA will be payable; *or*
  - d) if neither option a), b) or c) is possible, they may be required to take additional annual leave, advance annual leave or special leave without pay. In exceptional circumstances, SLWFP may be granted for a limited period of time as a last resort and on a case-by-case basis (for example, a staff member who has exhausted all annual leave balance and who initiated travel before travel restrictions were put in place).
- 68. Staff members who fall sick, including with COVID-19, during HL/FV may, subject to their organization's internal policies, be granted certified sick leave upon submission of a medical certificate to the Medical Director or designate.

### Education grant travel

69. Flexibility will be exercised to authorize advance and to defer education grant travel (EGT) in accordance with organizations' internal policies.
70. Staff members must be aware that local authorities may at any time prevent either departure from the EGT destination or entry to the duty station. In such cases, staff members should take this into consideration when accepting the lump sum option (where applicable), as in such cases they agree to waive all entitlements relating to EGT that would otherwise have been payable. Staff members are encouraged to purchase travel insurance when choosing the lump sum option.

### Rest and recuperation travel

71. Staff members must be aware that respective local authorities may at any time prevent either departure from the duty station or re-entry to the duty station or travel to and from a designated R&R location or other location. In such cases, staff members should take this into consideration when accepting the lump sum option. Staff members are encouraged to purchase travel insurance when travelling under the lump sum option.
72. In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, flexibility will be exercised in accordance with the guidance from the HR Network Field group on rest and recuperation travel (R&R). For ease of reference, available at the following link:

[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/covid\\_001\\_guidance\\_for\\_duty\\_stations\\_in\\_covid-19-affected\\_countries\\_entitled\\_to\\_rr\\_ra\\_e.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/covid_001_guidance_for_duty_stations_in_covid-19-affected_countries_entitled_to_rr_ra_e.pdf)

73. The HR Network Field Group continuously monitors this matter and will be issuing updates, as may be needed.

### Mandatory quarantine and COVID-19 testing

74. When travelling, staff may be authorized to telecommute for periods of mandatory quarantine at the place of destination and upon return at the official duty station whenever possible and compatible with exigencies of service.
75. Mandatory quarantine expenses may be reimbursable in line with the organizations' internal policies when staff members traveling on official business are required by Governments to quarantine in a specific designated facility and the related arrangements are not provided free of charge by the Government.
76. The costs of COVID-19 tests mandated by Governments or airlines for travel purposes may be reimbursed for certain types of official travel in line with the organizations' internal policies.

## **V. Recruitment and appointments**

### **Recruitment and reassignment**

77. The decision as to whether to initiate recruitment and reassignment of staff involving travel should be made in accordance with national travel advisories from the host country and taking into consideration the latest WHO guidance.
78. Recruitment and reassignment of staff:
- a) will be carried out in accordance with interests, needs and priorities of the organization; and
  - b) initiated in response to COVID-19 or requiring on-site presence will be given priority and the process will be expedited to the extent possible.
79. In the event of an initiated recruitment where a candidate is unable to travel to the duty station due to Covid-19 related travel restrictions and it is determined that the services of the candidate can be performed remotely at the place of recruitment, the post adjustment and related entitlements to be paid would be determined by the organization depending on the totality of circumstances, including but not limited to the length of the period of remote working and in accordance with the overall applicable conditions of service. If this is not possible, onboarding should be delayed.
80. In the event that a staff member is unable to travel to a duty station following a reassignment decision, the post adjustment and related entitlements to be paid would be determined by the organization depending on the totality of circumstances, including but not limited to the length of the period of remote working and in accordance with the overall applicable conditions of service.

### **Extension of appointment**

81. Every effort should be made to renew staff members' appointments at least one month in advance. Conversely, staff members should be informed of non-renewal of their appointments at least one month prior to expiry dates whenever possible.
82. When a staff member's appointment is extended solely due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions – such as when the staff member cannot leave the duty station and the visa cannot be renewed without an appointment - or due to office closure (both physical and virtual), such extension may not give rise to any further entitlement to salary increments, annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave, paternity leave or home leave, although credit towards repatriation grant may continue to accrue for the duration of the extension, in accordance with the organizations' internal policies.
83. Notwithstanding the above, the public health situation shall not be a factor in deciding on renewal and non-extension of appointments, including extension beyond the mandatory age of separation.

## Staff members holding permits/visas

84. Repatriation travel and shipment. If a staff member holds a visa/permit and is not requesting residency status, the staff member should be repatriated upon the expiration of the contract, and as soon as practicable. If a staff member chooses to remain in the official duty station for a longer period, this will not give rise to additional entitlements or further responsibility by the organization. The two-year time limit for submission of a claim for repatriation grant upon separation may be extended for the period a separating staff member is unable to obtain the required documentation due to COVID-19 context.
85. If departure from the official duty station is possible, but entry to the repatriation destination is not, a staff member can opt to be repatriated to a third location. In such cases, the cost of travel and related expenses (e.g. shipment) should not exceed the amount normally payable.

## VI. Salary, benefits and entitlements

### Payroll and salary advances

86. Organizations may authorize, (subject to the approval of the relevant organizational financial authority), under conditions established internally, salary advances in such amount as the official with delegated authority may deem appropriate. Salary advances shall be liquidated at a rate as determined by the Controller's (payroll) office of the organization. As far as feasible, the recovery start date and rate should be communicated to the staff member at the time the advance is authorized.

### Payment of entitlements that require original supporting documentation

87. **When offices are physically closed.** When payment of entitlements is dependent on submission of the original support documentation, the time limits for presentation of the documentation will be suspended during any physical office closure period due to COVID-19, provided a scanned/electronic copy is submitted within the relevant time limit.

### COVID-19 related Danger Pay

88. Based on WHO recommendation and in line with the established criteria for danger pay, as contained in A/66/30, Annex II, subparagraph 1(c), that danger pay can be authorized in "*non-protected environments where medical staff are specifically at risk to their life when deployed to deal with public health emergencies as declared by the WHO*", the Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) may approve Danger Pay for a limited group of internationally and locally recruited staff directly involved in the following COVID-19 operations (currently approved until 30 September 2021):

- provision of clinical care to patients with confirmed/suspected COVID-19;
  - actual screening of patients with suspected COVID-19;
  - drawing or processing of potentially hazardous specimens related to COVID-19; and
  - handling hazardous or potentially hazardous samples taken at a lab or screening facility.
89. Each of the four criteria listed above, may provide a basis for Danger Pay – COVID-19 on its own merit.
90. COVID-19-related danger pay may apply only in duty stations not included already in the ICSC list of duty stations qualifying for danger pay (i.e. no double payments are allowed for staff already in receipt of danger pay). Executive Heads and Heads of entities must strictly follow the above WHO eligibility criteria when identifying staff members eligible for COVID-19 danger pay.
91. The memoranda of the ICSC Chairman are accessible on the ICSC webpage (<https://icsc.un.org/Home/DataDangerPay>).
92. FAQs on the subject of Danger Pay: COVID-19 were developed in collaboration with WHO and are available on the ICSC website to assist organizations in their responses to any questions raised by staff members and managers and facilitate a harmonized and coherent implementation of Danger Pay: COVID-19.
93. The FAQs can be accessed as follows:  
[https://unicsc.org/resources/hrpd/dangerpay/DP\\_COVID19\\_FAQ\\_27April.pdf](https://unicsc.org/resources/hrpd/dangerpay/DP_COVID19_FAQ_27April.pdf)
94. The ICSC will periodically update the FAQs as it continues to monitor the health situation related to COVID-19 in close consultation with WHO.

## **Health insurance**

95. Staff members and their eligible family members who are enrolled in UN insurance programmes are covered for expenses incurred for qualified medical treatment of COVID-19 according to their insurance plan benefits. Staff members and their family members not enrolled in a medical plan indicated herein should ensure that their insurance plans cover sickness associated with COVID-19.
96. Staff members should be aware of the fact that enrolment in medical insurance plans may be based on their official duty station. Medical expenses in a different location, particularly outside the country of the duty station, might therefore result in out-of-pocket medical expenses.
97. Enrolment in health insurance, including after service health insurance (ASHI) should follow the applicable policy of the organisations with submission of documentation electronically if needed to ensure there is no lapse in medical coverage of eligible staff members.

## **Life insurance**

98. Staff members who are enrolled in the United Nations Group life insurance are covered for death as a result of COVID-19, in accordance with the existing policy.

## **VII. Death of a staff member**

99. It cannot be over-emphasized that all staff involved in making the various arrangements must use their utmost discretion, tact and sensitivity, particularly when dealing with the family or legal representative of the deceased. In case of queries from the family, legal representative or insurance companies, it is recommended that complete documentation on the procedures followed should be kept in a confidential file.

100. When a staff member, or the spouse or dependent child dies, the human resources office will assume responsibility for coordinating the actions required and serves as the link between the organization and the family or legal representative of the deceased, providing the family or legal representative assistance throughout the period following the death.

### **Death benefit**

101. In the case of death of a staff member, a death benefit shall be paid in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules.

### **Payments**

102. Priority will be given to arranging for the survivors/designated beneficiaries to receive any payment (or an advance) against any salary, allowances and benefits standing to the credit of the staff member as of the date of death.

### **After-service health insurance**

103. Family members who are eligible for ASHI must normally make application for ASHI within three months of staff member's death.

### **Compensation for service-incurred illness/injury/death**

104. Compensation will be provided to eligible staff members in the event of death, injury or illness considered to be attributable to the performance of official duties in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules and internal policies of the organizations.

### **Pension Fund benefits**

105. The UNJSPF has offices in New York and Geneva and provide services to participants and beneficiaries from both offices. In an extreme situation the UNJSPF would be able to implement its disaster recovery policy for payroll payments to beneficiaries.

### **Permits and visas**

106. A family member's authorized stay at the duty station normally expires upon the staff member's death. The same applies to any household employee whose visa is derived from the status of the staff member.

107. Most national authorities allow staff members and their families a certain period (e.g. 30 days) after the date of death in which to leave the country or adjust their status. If additional time is required, the family members should contact the relevant staff responsible for permits/visas at the duty station for guidance in requesting extension of the normal grace period.

## Education grant

108. When a staff member dies while in service **after** the beginning of the school year, no prorating or disqualification will take place in respect of any element of the education grant (EG) to which the staff member would have been entitled had he/she lived to the end of the school year, including boarding expenses or a flat sum for board and EGT.
109. The EG related forms must be completed by the surviving spouse, the legal representative of the child for whom the EG or EGT is paid, or by the child for whom the claim is requested, if 18 years of age or older. If the school year ends when the final payment has already been processed, settlement will be made as a direct payment to the survivor.

## Repatriation grant<sup>12</sup>

110. Family members who are eligible for payment of repatriation grant, must normally claim and provide evidence of relocation within two years of the staff member's death. The two-year time limit for submission of a claim for repatriation grant upon separation may be extended for the period the family members are unable to obtain the required documentation due to COVID-19 context.

## Repatriation travel and shipment<sup>13</sup>

111. Family members who are entitled to repatriation travel should initiate travel and/or shipment of personal effects as soon as practicable. If a family member chooses to remain at the official duty station for a longer period, this may not give rise to additional entitlements or further responsibility by the organization. If family members cannot be repatriated due to COVID-19 this may give rise to additional entitlements to be determined on a case by case basis until such time as the family members can be repatriated. The two-year time limit may be extended if the family member is unable to travel and/or ship personal effects due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

## Repatriation of remains or local interment

112. Before making any arrangements, it is necessary that the family be consulted whether they wish: local burial; cremation and repatriation; or embalming and repatriation. In all instances, the local regulations and laws and IHR shall apply while the specific instructions of the family of the deceased should be observed as closely as possible. However, during the pandemic, the repatriation of a deceased staff member (or the family member) could be delayed or not authorized.

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<sup>12, 13</sup> International staff members only.