

# Pandemic leave policy.

## Version control

Version	Date	Revisions by	Comments
2	02/2021	People Services	

## 1 Purpose and Scope

This policy provides guidance regarding the taking of leave in relation to Uniting WA employees contracting Corona Virus or being exposed to the virus either via proximity or during the course of and/or international travel.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Pandemic Plan Flexible Work Policy.

## 2 Permanent Full time/ Part time employees

- 2.1 Where a permanent employee becomes ill (flu/cold), they will be required to utilise their personal leave and or annual leave (as per standard practice).
- 2.2 If the person is medically confirmed as having Coronavirus and they have exhausted their leave entitlements (personal and annual leave) then they will be entitled to access personal leave in advance up to 10 working days for full time staff, (pro-rated for part time staff).
- 2.3 Employees who access leave in arrears will be required to complete a “Permitted Deductions” form which enables Uniting WA to recoup any monies owing at the time an employee ceases employment with Uniting WA.
- 2.4 A “fitness for work” certificate will be required before returning to the work environment, however through negotiations with the direct team lead/practice lead, employees may be able to engage in working from home if the role enables this activity (refer to “Pandemic Plan Flexible Working Policy”).
- 2.5 Note: You may choose to take unpaid personal leave and not access annual leave or go into arrears as long as your personal leave has all been utilised.

## 3 Casual employees

- 3.1 To ensure casuals are not disadvantaged, Uniting WA has decided to offer 10 days paid “personal leave” to cover them during a period where they cannot attend for work because they have or suspected to have the virus.
- 3.2 An employee will need to produce evidence that can satisfy a reasonable person. This could be either a Doctor’s certificate or a statutory declaration.
- 3.3 This “personal leave” will then need to be reimbursed to Uniting WA. The employee will need to sign a permitted deduction form obtainable from their supervisor to agree to have this deducted from subsequent pays. The amount deducted will be 25% of the value of the hours worked when the employee returns (i.e., the amount of the employee’s casual loading)
- 3.4 Any additional leave in excess of 10 days will be taken as leave without pay.
- 3.5 A “fitness for work” certificate will be required before returning to the work environment

## 4 Importance of self-isolation

Given the announcements made by the Federal Government Health Department to address the spread of COVID 19 it is critical that employees take responsibility to self-isolate if they notice they have any of the symptoms associated with the virus. As noted above, Uniting WA have made provision for both permanent and casual employees to access leave to cover them for a period of self – isolation if they have no personal leave available to them. Therefore, there is no reason for an employee to turn up to work if they begin to develop the relevant symptoms

The Federal Government have made available a ‘symptom checker’ which you are encouraged to use to assess whether you should self-isolate or not: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/healthdirect-coronavirus-covid-19-symptom-checker>

In the current crisis, we all have a duty of care to others to ensure that we don’t infect them and spread the virus. The recent announcement of the Federal Government on the 29/3/2020 on social isolating makes it clear that more extreme measures are now being taken in the community.

(<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-on-social-distancing>). If an employee attends work with the presenting symptoms, they will be immediately sent home. They will also be required to explain why they attended work with these symptoms and, subject to their response, Uniting WA may take disciplinary action.

## 5 Overseas travel

- 5.1 As per the directive released by the Federal Government [see https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-international-travellers](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-international-travellers) on 15/3/2020 or by following the most up to date directions specified by the Australian Government Department of Health and the Western Australian Department of Health, a person who has travelled overseas will be required to self-isolate for 14 days after their date of return to Australia.
- 5.2 If the person is in a position to work from home, they may do so with the permission of their Practice Lead/Team Lead (refer to “Pandemic Plan Flexible Working Policy”).
- 5.3 Where a person has travelled overseas and returns unwell, they must seek medical confirmation of the nature of their illness and the process outlined above will prevail.
- 5.4 Where a person is unwell during this period, they will require medical confirmation that they are “fit to return to work”.

## 6 School closures

- 6.1 The WA Education Department announced that students can attend public schools in the final week before the school holidays. However, they indicated that they have a preference for students to stay home and access their lessons on line between 30th March to 3rd April 2020. The update notes that independent and catholic schools will have their own arrangements (<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/coronavirus-school-update>)
- 6.2 In the event that an employee’s children is/are unable to attend childcare or school, the employee will have the opportunity to work from home or access their personal leave/annual leave to care for their children.

- 6.3 If the employee has insufficient leave then they may access personal leave in arrears up to 10 days for full time, prorated for part time employees.
- 6.4 Where an employee has exhausted their leave, they are encouraged to apply to take leave without pay in accordance with Clause 6.3 of the Uniting WA Employee Collective Agreement.

## 7 Variations

- 7.1 Uniting reserves, the rights to vary or change this Guideline from time to time.

## 8 Related Documents

- 8.1 Flexible Work Policy.