

Guidance for Employees Working Remotely

While the manager plays an essential role in leading a virtual team, individual employees should also be aware and plan for the changing dynamics. Here are suggestions for virtual employees:

- **Be prepared for meetings and participate.** Login to the meeting on time with information prepared for your update. Remove distractions as much as possible. While your fellow dog-loving colleagues may be happy to see your puppy in the background, barking dogs can be deafening in a virtual meeting. Wear headphones if possible. It is easy to disengage during a virtual meeting, so brush up on your listening and communication skills. Take notes and write down questions to be asked later.
- **Be a self-starter.** Everyone should be focusing on working somewhat independently. This may mean creating a system of organization that is different than what you would have in your physical office. It also may mean sticking to structures or schedules so you have focused, dedicated time.
- **Pay attention to your stress and emotions.** Many people see working from home as a pathway to greater work-life balance, but it can be hard to adapt to the isolation you may feel. You may also feel disconnected from members of your team who are still working in the office. If FOMO (fear of missing out) gets too intense, know when to ask for some face time with your manager or members of the team. If you are feeling overwhelmed, reach out for help.

UMass Amherst offers two support options for faculty, staff and their families:

1. The on-campus counselors at the [Faculty and Staff Assistance Program \(FSAP\)](#) will continue to be available to support the staff and faculty of the University during this closing. In order to comply with the social distancing plans implemented by the University, FSAP is conducting most routine appointments by phone. They are monitoring phone messages closely and will get back to people as soon as possible. They are happy to talk about how to support individuals or departments though this time so don't hesitate to reach out to them. **Call:** 413-545-0350

2. UMass Amherst Employees also have access to **additional services** through our outside EAP provider, **Optum**. They offer various support services including referrals to off-campus therapists for free consultations. **Call Anytime:** 1-844-263-1982 or visit the website: <https://www.liveandworkwell.com> (use access code: Mass4You)

- **Be flexible and empathetic.** As other members of your team make the transition to virtual work, they may struggle in different ways. Some may need to learn new technologies. Some may not be as comfortable, and some may have accessibility concerns. If technology hiccups happen, be prepared with a backup plan, and be patient as the kinks get worked out.

- **Be prepared for a different ways of approaching accountability.** This may mean more detailed or different documentation of your work and time than you typically do, given the physical distance between you and your employer.
- **Abide by the expectations set for the team.** Whether this is related to work hours, technology tools, or communication processes, the expectations that were set collaboratively with your team and there to ensure that the virtual work environment is productive for everyone. Discuss with your manager individually if you are having trouble following a specific expectation.
- **Create a professional home work space.** Keep in mind that you will likely be logging/calling into meetings or may be having video chats often. Set your workspace apart from other activities and clear as much clutter as possible. This doesn't require setting up a home office, but an open wall behind you and a table to set your computer on during meetings will help create a sense of professionalism. Pay attention to professional standards of appearance as necessary for your work obligations (i.e. don't arrive for the video call in your pajamas ☺).

Skills of Effective Virtual Team Members:

- Flexibility and adaptability
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Ability to think locally and globally
- Listening skills
- Initiative and self-management
- Enthusiasm
- Consensus building skills
- Collaborative skills
- Patience and empathy
- Nonjudgmental attitude
- Be Inclusive

Additional resources for employees:

- [UMass Response to Covid-19](#)
- [Disruption Resilience: Remote Work Resources for Staff and Faculty](#)
- [Stay Connected: Communication & Collaboration Tools](#)
- [How to Shift to a Virtual Office Setting](#)
- [Partnership for Worker Education online learning and support](#)
- [Workplace Learning & Development workshops via Zoom and self-guided learning](#)
- [Email Support Articles and Tools](#)
- [Zoom at UMass](#)
- [Zoom Help](#)
- [Teams Help](#)

Resource Articles:

- [The Art of Working Remotely](#)
- [How to do Remote Work: Productivity Tips](#)
- [Top 8 Remote Work Tips](#)

If you have any questions regarding tele-working during the Covid-19 response, please look on-line at [campus page Covid-19](#), and/or talk to your supervisor.