Plugged In: For UMaine Extension Staff & Volunteers

COVID-19 FAQ

This FAQ will be updated regularly as information becomes available.

UMaine and UMS Information on Coronavirus

Cooperative Extension is following guidance and policy issued by UMaine and the University of Maine System.

- UMS Coronavirus Health Advisory Site
- UMS Workplace Policies and Guidance regarding COVID-19
- UMS Travel Advisories
- UMS COVID-19 Guidance on University Travel for Business and Personal Travel
- UMaine Novel Coronavirus Community Updates, including Frequently Asked Questions
- UMaine Emergency Information

UMaine Extension COVID-19 FAQs

The FAQ information provided below pertains uniquely to Extension. These FAQs cover our guidance and plans for the next few weeks, and will be updated regularly as conditions warrant.

Our primary concern remains the health and safety of all our people.

Using campus, CDC and Extension advice, please make decisions that ensure the health and well-being of everyone.

Out-of-state business travel

Extension is asking staff to cancel all non-essential business travel out of state at this time. If you believe your circumstance warrants an exception please contact Dean Hannah Carter.

Out-of state (or out-of-country) program participants

Currently there are no restrictions on program participants entering Maine from other states and/or countries to participate in Extension programming. The only restriction would be if UMaine were paying their travel, such as a conference speaker, that will not be allowed (at this point).

Canceling and rescheduling events/programs/meetings

All UMaine Cooperative Extension events, programs, and noncredit classes involving groups larger than 20 participants should be cancelled or offered via distance technologies, through at least April 6, 2020. County offices should cancel public meetings being held in their conference rooms. We will continue to monitor the situation and make recommendations in increments.

Staff should refrain from scheduling new gatherings larger than 20 attendees until further notice.

Event Cancellation Language

When announcing a cancellation, please let attendees know:

> "Given the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation in Maine, UMaine Extension is making the decision to cancel indoor events of more than 20 attendees happening through April 6. [If applicable] We will process refunds as soon as possible. If you have questions please do not hesitate to contact xxxxxx person."
>
> From there you may wish to promote resources Extension can offer community members, such as, XXXXXX and if you can offer a distance learning substitute you may.

If your event is after April 6 and waiting until that date to determine whether to cancel is not possible, you may notify registrants of the cancellation and do not have to say exactly why you are doing so. You may simply say:

> "I am writing to share that we've decided to cancelxxx, originally scheduled for this xxx. We ask for your patience as we begin processing refunds. Thank you for your interest in this event and please do not hesitate to contact me at xxxx if you have any questions."

Volunteer-led events/programs/meetings

The above guidance about events/programs/meetings would also apply to those run by Extension volunteers. Extension staff should communicate this information to their volunteers.

If the program/meeting is less than 20 people and will still be happening please remind volunteers to check with the location in which that program is supposed to occur to be sure that location is still open to outside groups using their space.

UMaine student-led events/programs

If Extension programs are being led by UMaine System students they should be cancelled for the remainder of the semester. The only potential exception would be if the student is doing this work for academic credit then Extension staff should work this out with their faculty partner.

Relocating programs to alternative locations

If your current program location is no longer available and you are considering new locations, please consider the following:

- The new location should be large enough to handle the size of your group keeping in mind the guidance about social distance and needs to be accessible.
- Moving a program to someone's home may not be the best choice due to possible liability to the homeowner (this is true in general).

Who should respond to media inquiries?

It is fine to respond to questions about specific event cancellations, but any questions related to UMaine's response to COVID-19 and all other media inquiries should be directed to Margaret Nagle, Senior Director of Public Relations via email (nagle@maine.edu) or phone (office: 207.581.3745; mobile 207.949.4149).

Office closings

- All Extension offices remain open and staffed as of this time.
- Any decisions to close an Extension office shall be in consultation with the Program Administrator and/or Fran Sulinski, with the final decision to be made by Dean Hannah Carter. Offices will not close according to their snow gauge.
- We are advising all staff to set up clear communication methods (Cell phone and email) to stay in touch with each in the event that the office needs to close.

Working from home

- Employees are encouraged to stay home when ill and to leave work if they become ill.
- Employees may stay home and, if feasible, work remotely when sick or caring for sick household members. Employees should discuss remote work arrangements with their supervisor.
- UMS will continue to monitor state and federal agency guidance and adjust work and leave practices as appropriate. In the meantime, information regarding paid leave and Family Medical Leave (FML) can be found on the MyCampus benefits page.
- Other related staff guidance may be found at University of Maine System Workplace Policies and Guidance regarding COVID-19.

Best practices in offices

- If you have been advised by a public health official to restrict movements to halt spread of COVID-19, Do Not Return To Your Work Location. Please call your manager or supervisor to discuss work arrangements.
- Continue to encourage welcoming environments for ALL members of our community.
- If you are concerned about your safety you may speak with your supervisor, Fran Sulinski or our HR Partner Brian Drisko. A staff member may use annual leave to be away from the office.

Concerns about staff and volunteers who have recently traveled

If UMaine Extension staff and/or volunteers have traveled recently, we are following the guidance of UMS HR: UMS COVID-19 Guidance on University Travel for Business and Personal Travel

As of this time there are no restrictions on employees 'self-isolating" from areas other than CDC level 3. Countries that have a Level 3 Travel Health Notice (widespread, ongoing transmission):

- China (Level 3 Travel Health Notice)
  - More information for Travelers from China arriving in the United States
- Iran (Level 3 Travel Health Notice)
- Italy (Level 3 Travel Health Notice)
- South Korea (Level 3 Travel Health Notice)

Financial considerations

- **Losses due to program cancellations**: If you have committed funds to an event that is canceled please make an effort to seek refunds. If you cannot get refunds some central resources may be available to mitigate losses. Please work with Dennis Harrington on specific situations.
- **Flexible Staff Development**: If you have committed funds to a staff development event that is cancelled please make an effort to seek a refund. If you cannot get a refund Extension base funds will cover the expense and your staff development balance will not be penalized.

Emergency Notification Status

Staff are encouraged to update their *Emergency Notification Status* at Update Account Information.

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