

Guidance for Departments and Offices for Working in a Social Distancing Environment

In this document, MIT Emergency Management provides guidance to faculty, students, staff, and other MIT Community members who are working during the time when MIT has implemented a social distancing environment. These recommendations are based on the current understanding of a rapidly evolving public health concern. They are subject to change and may be updated.

Summary guidance and recommendations

- **The health and safety of MIT Community members remains the highest priority.**
- **MIT community members who are sick should stay home.**
- Most undergraduate students will have moved off campus by Tuesday, March 17, 2020.
- MIT intends to remain open, even with fewer people on campus. This business continuity means that employee pay and benefits will continue uninterrupted.
- All MIT employees who can work from home should make arrangements with their supervisors to do so. Employees should work with their supervisors on a plan to work remotely that is specific to the employee's responsibilities.
- For employees whose work cannot be done remotely, we encourage implementation of social distancing and other best practices, and development of individualized workplans that minimize [close contact](#) by limiting time on campus to what is necessary; conducting meetings virtually; or implementing other creative strategies to reduce the density of employees on campus.
- Supervisors should be especially attentive to employees who may be at a higher risk for COVID-19.
- Teams should attempt to maintain frequent and all-staff communication, whether on- or off-campus. Two options are using [Slack](#) and group text messages.
- Questions about COVID-19 can be directed to the following email addresses:
 - Questions related to HR, benefits, work environment, or pay can be directed to covid-hr@mit.edu.
 - Medical questions related to COVID-19 can be directed to medical@mit.edu.
 - Travel questions related to COVID-19 can be directed to covidtravel@mit.edu.
 - Questions about events can be directed to covidevents@mit.edu.
 - Students seeking support related to COVID-19 can contact covid19-support@mit.edu.
 - Any additional questions or requests for planning support can be directed to em-staff@mit.edu.

Additional suggested actions and activities

Although this situation is causing MIT employees to work in a different environment, this is an opportunity to work together to develop and implement creative strategies to incorporate social distancing in the workplace. Convene your team (virtually if needed) and collaborate on a set of shared best practices and procedures for this new work environment.

Each DLC supervisor should work with all team members on a plan that sets clear rules and expectations for:

- How to participate in DLC activities that promote social distancing;
- How to prepare to participate in activities partly or fully virtualized; and
- How to remain flexible and up-to-date as guidance changes.

General considerations may include:

- Being compassionate and empathetic about the huge disruption COVID-19 has caused for students, staff, and faculty in your DLC.
- Encouraging team members to work remotely as much as possible.
- Encouraging team members to bring any ideas, concerns, or questions to supervisors, and to reach out for support if needed.

Basic elements of a social distancing plan may include:

- Creating key principles, values, and goals specific to the DLC.
- Being clear about expectations for participation.
- Addressing both the operational and social interactions of the group.
- Communicating the plan consistently to all team members.
- Evaluating the plan periodically as conditions change and revising it as needed to improve effectiveness.
- Setting up a shared calendar for all team members to use.
- Scheduling frequent group meetings via [WebEx, Skype, or Zoom](#). For more see IS&T's [Resources for Working Remotely During Campus Emergencies](#).
- Encouraging the use of [Slack](#) or other social sharing tools to stay in touch.

Best practices when working remotely:

- Ask all team members if they have access to the technology needed to participate remotely (computer, reliable internet service). If they do not, consider providing a laptop or wifi hotspot to enable remote work.
- Ask all team members to keep similar remote work hours to maintain operations progress and social connection.
- All team meetings should be held remotely, if possible, and especially those with over 25 attendees. If in-person meetings must be held, follow the social distancing practices below.
- Team members should be accessible during established work hours via [Slack](#), text, email, phone, or other common communication tools.
- Use [WebEx or Zoom](#) for 1:1 and group meetings. MIT has a common site license for both.
- Consider data security issues when sharing information. MIT enterprise VPN (Cisco AnyConnect) and email (Outlook) is recommended.

Best practices for reducing density / increasing social distancing in when on-campus work is required:

- Set up a plan for alternating shifts while on-campus to reduce person density. For example, establish two teams that can perform the same functions but can come in at different times of the day.

- Establish clear rules for physical presence while on-campus:
 - Ensure all team members still adhere to existing safety rules for the workplace.
 - Observe social distancing (approximately two meters, or six feet between persons).
 - Sanitize high-touch surfaces, including equipment knobs/handles, door knobs, phones, keyboards, and vehicle interiors when you leave the space. Have hand sanitizer and wipes available if possible.
 - The Institute has deployed hand sanitizers at the entrance way of most of the academic buildings. These will be stocked and maintained by Custodial Services. All others that a department may like to deploy will be up to the individual department to stock and maintain. The Institute ordered the stands (Item # 2847431) and refills (item #2801416) from Staples. There are also other options within Staples and other vendors.
 - Wash hands or use hand sanitizer when entering/exiting rooms or restrooms.
 - Cover your mouth with your elbow or a tissue to shield others from your cough or sneeze.
 - Encourage health-minded commuting practices (walk or bike if possible, sanitize after using public transportation). Drive to work if this option is available. Until further notice, parking in MIT lots is free for anyone with an MIT ID.
 - Avoid social touching (handshakes, social hugs).
 - Avoid touching your face.
 - Eliminate communal food as much as possible. Encourage food brought from home and purchase pre-packaged items.

Additional Resources

- MIT COVID-19 response updates: <http://web.mit.edu/covid19/>
- MIT Medical COVID-19 blog: <https://medical.mit.edu/news/2020/01/2019-novel-coronavirus-updates-1>
- MIT Medical social distancing and hygiene best practices: <https://medical.mit.edu/three-ways-to-protect>
- MIT Work-Life Center: <https://hr.mit.edu/worklife/>
- Backup childcare: <https://hr.mit.edu/worklife/child-care>
- MIT Virtual Private Network: <https://ist.mit.edu/vpn>
- MIT Email: <https://ist.mit.edu/email>
- MIT Virtual Conferencing: <https://ist.mit.edu/conferencing?category=7>
- MIT WebEx: <https://mit.webex.com/webappng/sites/mit/dashboard?siteurl=mit>
- Teaching Continuity: <http://teachremote.mit.edu>
- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>