



## **CEAT Communication During A Pandemic**

**Procedures  
CCB-017  
Effective Date: 6/8/21**

- 1.01 During a pandemic (such as COVID-19), there is a lot of confusion, questions, and fear/anxiety. It is important to communicate effectively when communicating with your stakeholders, whether they are parents, students, customers, employees, etc. Following are OSU College of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology (CEAT) guidelines to follow when communicating.

### **Protecting Employee Medical Information**

- 2.01 OSU employees are to respect the confidentiality of individuals who test positive or are ill with COVID-19 symptoms. Supervisors can notify CEAT HR at [ceathr@okstate.edu](mailto:ceathr@okstate.edu), but should not release information otherwise.
- 2.02 Always be aware of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) violations. Giving out personal information (medical information, academic information, personal information, etc.) to anyone, including parents, is against OSU policy. For more information, see <https://hr.okstate.edu/protecting-employee-medical-information>.

### **What should I do if a parent calls to check on their child (who has tested positive)?**

- 3.01 You are prohibited to release any personal information about the student, even to parents due to HIPAA, FERPA and OSU policies. Instead, reassure them by telling them what measures OSU and CEAT are taking to keep their child safe. Explain, in detail, what actions are being taken to keep the CEAT community safe.

### **If I have an employee who has tested positive, may I inform my other employees (for their safety)?**

- 4.01 No. This would violate HIPAA and OSU policies. UHS takes proactive measures to inform all those necessary. Instead, you can inform your employees that an employee will be absent for a while and discuss what will need to be done in his/her absence. You should reassure your employees by explaining why you cannot release personal information, and what all the University and College is doing to keep the CEAT community safe.

### **What should I say to someone who is angry because I will not share information about someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?**

- 5.01 Explain to them that under the HIPAA and FERPA guidelines and OSU policy, you are not legally allowed to provide this information and that University Health Services is taking care of informing

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anyone who needs to know. Reassure your employees that if there is concern of exposure (Refer to CCB-003 procedure) to them, they will be notified by the proper authorities.

**What should I do when I encounter someone who is showing signs of being sick in a common area (such as an office space or classroom)?**

- 6.01 Supervisors have the authority to ask an employee who is showing signs of being ill to go home until he/she is feeling better and no longer showing symptoms.

**What should I say to a student or employee who is concerned and worried about the COVID-19 situation?**

- 7.01 If someone is showing signs of distress you can talk to them and let them know that you want to help. Assist them with finding the right resources for them (such as University Counseling Services, their advisor, supervisor, etc.). OSU has many resources available to faculty, staff and students that can assist with anxiety and distress. University Counseling Services may be contacted at: <https://ucs.okstate.edu/> or 405-744-5458.

**What should I tell an employee who is in the high-risk category, and is concerned about coming back to work?**

- 8.01 Explain to them that they will need to follow the OSU procedure with the Office of Equal Opportunity (405-744-7607 or [eeo@okstate.edu](mailto:eeo@okstate.edu)). Schedule a time with the CEAT HR representative ([ceathr@okstate.edu](mailto:ceathr@okstate.edu)) to discuss their options.

**What should I tell an employee who is not comfortable coming to work due to possible exposure?**

- 9.01 You should let the employee know you understand their concerns, show compassion. Schedule an appointment with CEAT HR ([ceathr@okstate.edu](mailto:ceathr@okstate.edu)) to discuss their options. HR can provide support in facilitating conversations with supervisors and employees to determine needs and accommodations available to meet those needs. Possible accommodations may include continuing office restructuring, possible schedule rotations, reduced FTE, or approving temporary use of appropriate accrued leave. Any request for accommodation for a disability should comply with the Americans Disabilities Act (ADA), in coordination with the Office of Equal Opportunity.

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**What should I tell an employee who would rather work from home than come into the office, but does not have any underlining health concerns?**

10.01 Explain to them that staying off campus prevents others from interacting with them and requires others to do campus duties that would typically fall to them. Explain that we are a university with interactions that are not easily done virtually. Talk to them about the measures OSU and CEAT is taking to keep the CEAT and OSU community safe. Listen to their concerns and try to work out an arrangement that will work for everyone. If there are any concerns, the employee should visit with CEAT HR ([ceathr@okstate.edu](mailto:ceathr@okstate.edu)) to discuss what their options are.

**Who can I contact for further guidance?**

- 11.01 Below is a list of resources that can assist you when you have questions:
- OSU Human Resources: [osu-hr@okstate.edu](mailto:osu-hr@okstate.edu) or <https://hr.okstate.edu/>
  - CEAT HR: [ceathr@okstate.edu](mailto:ceathr@okstate.edu)
  - University Health Services: 405-744-7665
  - OSU COVID-19 Information: <https://go.okstate.edu/coronavirus/>
  - CEAT COVID-19 Information: <https://ceat.okstate.edu/COVID-general.html>

*Date approved by the CEAT COVID-19 Incident Management Team (IMT) Chief of the Planning Section and IMT Head: 8/13/20, Revised 8/18/20, Revised 10/23/20, Revised 6/8/21*