What is a voluntary furlough?

- A voluntary full furlough is a temporary elimination of all work hours for a specified period of time not to exceed 120 days. While on a full furlough, you will remain in an active, but unpaid status. During this time, you will continue to receive your current health benefits, as well as your disability and life insurance.

- A voluntary partial furlough is the reduction of work for a specified period of time not to exceed 120 days. During a Partial Furlough, an employee cannot work less than 60% of their current work schedule. You will be paid for the time worked; the time not worked will be unpaid. While on Partial Furlough, an employee would continue to receive their current health benefits, life insurance, disability insurance, and participate in their elected retirement plan (contributions are adjusted based on reduced salary in partial furlough).

Who is eligible for the Voluntary Furlough Program?

- All regular full and part time staff are eligible for the Voluntary Furlough Program. Regular part time staff can only participate in the full furlough program.

What are the steps a staff member should take to request a voluntary furlough?

- The staff member will apply to request a voluntary furlough through a form that will be on the SAS-HR website. You will be given more detailed information on this next week. Determination of approval for furlough requests will be completed by SAS HR in consultation with the relevant manager within a week after the application window closes.

What type of documentation is required by the department and the staff member?

- Voluntary Furlough Request Form - The proposal, completed by the staff member via the form, should lay out a plan for either the Full or Partial Furlough Program.
- Furlough Agreement - The agreement, signed by the staff member and supervisor/department head, outlines the terms of the Full or Partial Voluntary Furlough and any benefits the staff member is eligible to receive. This will be provided if the furlough is approved.

If I sign up for the Voluntary Furlough, when will it begin?

- The window to sign up for a voluntary furlough will be from Tuesday, September 8, 2020 through 5:00p.m. Friday, September 18, 2020. The furlough period will run from October 1, 2020 through January 31, 2021. Furloughs may begin on the first day of any month in that period but will end no later than January 31, 2021.
What is the maximum period for furlough?

- This furlough period will not exceed 120 days.

If I sign up for a voluntary furlough can it be less than 120 days?

- Yes, you can sign up for less than 120 days. For example you could sign up for one, two or three months at either the partial or full level.

What happens to the employee’s status at the end of the furlough period?

- At the conclusion of the furlough, the employee is expected to return to the same position where their regular job duties and regular base salary shall be reinstated.

If an employee is on a Partial Furlough, will they be able to change their benefit elections because of the reduced salary?

- Only an employee impacted by Full Furlough would be able to discontinue or change Penn’s medical benefits. An employee impacted by Partial Furlough would not.

How will benefits be affected during furlough?

- The health benefits for which the employee is currently enrolled will continue. For Partial Furlough, benefit deductions will continue to be deducted from the employee’s pay. For those in Full Furlough, the University will hold their benefit contributions in suspense while they are in unpaid status. Upon their return to work, the University will recoup the health contributions that were in suspense from the employee.
- Life and disability insurance will continue based on regular benefits base.
- Retirement contributions will be reduced based on the reduced salary or suspended in the case of Full Furlough.
- Paid Time Off (PTO) accruals (including sick) and holiday pay will be suspended during the furlough period for those employees on Full Furlough.
- For employees on Partial Furlough, PTO will accrue at the pro-rated amount based on the reduced hours of work. Employees on partial furlough will receive their regular rate for the hours not worked if a holiday falls on a day that they are scheduled to be on furlough.
- Employees must work enough hours to qualify for any benefits or policies that require a certain amount of service (e.g., benefits under the Family and Medical Leave Act require a minimum of 1,250 hours in the 12-month period preceding the leave).

Will the furlough period count towards service time for calculating pay and benefit continuation, as well as retirement eligibility (Rule of 75)?

- Yes, the furlough period shall be considered active service for calculating pay and benefits continuation, as well as retirement eligibility (Rule of 75).
Can the furloughed employee use their accrued PTO (vacation and sick time) during the furlough period?

- Full Furloughed employees can utilize their accrued vacation time. Such time must be used at the beginning of the Full Furlough period and all accrued vacation days must be used in its entirety. Partial accrued vacation usage is not permitted. Partial Furloughed employees can only use PTO on the days they are scheduled to work.
- Sick time is not allowed to be used during the Full Furlough period. During Partial Furlough period employee can only use sick time on the days they are scheduled to work.

Can those on a partial furlough change which hours they work or how many hours they work under the furlough agreement once they have applied and received approval of their proposed schedule?

- No. As a reminder, a Partial Furlough cannot be less than 60% of the current work schedule. Hourly (Non-Exempt) employees who are on Partial Furlough will continue to be paid the same hourly rate but will work fewer hours each week. Salaried (Exempt) employees who are on Partial Furlough will have their weekly work expectations reduced by 20% or 40%, (i.e., to an 80% or 60% schedule) along with a commensurate percentage reduction in their weekly salary. In no case, however, may a Salaried (Exempt) employee have their annual salary reduced below $35,568 (which is $684/week), which is the current minimum salary threshold for exempt status under federal and state law.

Can people who opt for a Voluntary Furlough receive Unemployment?

- Decisions on who receives unemployment are made by the state. Since this is a voluntary furlough program, unemployment will likely be denied.

Who is responsible for my work while I am out on furlough?

- It is up to your supervisor or department head to determine how duties will be divided if you are out on approved furlough. You will likely be asked to provide information regarding your day-to-day work in order to assist with the shift or temporary suspension of responsibilities.

While out on full furlough, am I permitted to work if something critical comes up that requires my attention?

- No. You are not permitted to work while out on full furlough. If you intend to work, you must submit a request to end the furlough and return to paid status.

While out on furlough do I still have access to Penn resources such as EAP, the Library, Home Ownership Services, etc.?

- Yes, the furlough period is considered an active status and Penn resources will still be available to you to access.

Please address any questions you may have about the Voluntary Furlough Program to SAS-HR@sas.upenn.edu