

# Important Updates to EOHSI Return To Work Guidelines

## July 23, 2021

Please see below important updates and clarifications to the 'EOHSI Return to Research Guidelines' we distributed on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. Please pay close attention to the main revisions that are listed below. As an employee you are required to comply with all RU policies, which include those described here and on the website.

### A. New Mandates from RBHS and Rutgers

- All RBHS 'Covered Individuals' are required to be fully vaccinated. This includes clinicians, faculty, staff, researchers who have direct contact with patients or patient specimens (blood, tissue saliva, etc). This definition also includes close contact with patients in the clinical or in the clinic area.
- Covered Individuals are required to upload proof of vaccination to the Rutgers immunization portal. Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action unless the individual has been granted a formal exemption (medical, religious, etc).

- RBHS provides updates on the current status of certified vaccination among covered employees in each unit. EOHSI has 70 employees who are required to upload proof of vaccination. As of June 21, 2021, 19/70 (~27%) of the individuals required to do so have failed to either upload evidence of vaccination or of greater concern, failed to be vaccinated. This is unacceptable and we are required by RBHS to follow-up with all individuals who have not yet uploaded their information. All these individuals are required to either upload their information or obtain an exemption ASAP to avoid possible sanctions.
- Given the availability of highly effective vaccines, RBHS will no longer provide routine COVID testing moving forward. Testing will only be performed for medical reasons or confirmed exposures to infected individuals. Also note that insurance companies will no longer pay for routine, medically unnecessary testing.
- As we have reached the important milestone of repopulating Rutgers labs at to full capacity, after July 31st, requesting approval through the [Return to Research Portal](#) is no longer necessary to bring on research personnel.

## B. Clarification of the EOHSI Guidelines

- It has come to our attention that there seems to be some confusion regarding the number of days that we are expecting *EOHSI employees* to work on site. The guidelines clearly stated that **all** are required to work in the building 4 days a week unless they have a specific and valid reason for an exemption. Preference for working at home is **NOT** considered a valid reason and goes against the spirit of President Holloway's mandate.
- Although immediate supervisors may decide to accept such exemptions for valid reasons (medical, psychological, caregiver, daycare, etc.), these must be certified and cleared by the EOHSI Administration.

- Supervisors are asked **NOT** to grant exemptions based on the preference of the employee, as this creates the perception of favoritism and inequity by those who have a similar preference and are required to come to work. Please note that equity in this context is not an issue related to the Institute's draft Diversity, Equity, and Inclusiveness plan. We are trying to make sure that the return to work process is the same for all, with few validated exemptions.
- There is also some confusion regarding differential requirements among building occupants regarding number of days of onsite work expected for employees. EOHSI is populated by employees from of several different RBHS units. This includes the clinical faculty and staff who have never stopped working through the pandemic. EOHSI inhabitants also include faculty and staff who work for other units or work in more than one unit. Each of these units may have different requirements for onsite work schedules. Those whose primary employer is for example the School of Pharmacy, or the School of Public Health may choose to follow the guidelines from that unit. Resident faculty and all staff whose primary appointment is in EOHSI should follow our guidelines.
- Although this may give the appearance of inequity, President Holloway specifically did not mandate the same number of days for each unit because each is different with respect to number of employees, workspace configuration and functions. EOHSI is not very crowded, and we have multiple functions including clinical, research and teaching. The Pharmacy office on the fourth floor, for example, is primarily concerned with teaching. However, most of our staff are also associated with the clinic and research. As such we function best when most employees are on site. Remember that the guidelines do not prevent anyone from other units from coming to work more days than the minimum, so long as safety is not compromised. They are encouraged to do so if it increases the efficiency of EOHSI.

- Please note that all other aspects of the EOHSI guidelines including wearing of masks in common areas and social distancing, apply to ALL building occupants, whether fulltime, part time, or visiting, regardless of the employing unit. All EOHSI employees are required to follow these Institute guidelines.