

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

**Emergency Relief / Natural Disaster Volunteer Procedures**

**Background:**

Many UW SOM faculty and staff request permission to participate as volunteers on emergency relief/natural disaster response teams. As an organization we strive to support the participation of our faculty and staff in these activities.

When natural disasters or other emergencies occur, the SoM has several standard procedures for its faculty, staff and trainees to follow to participate in relief efforts. Below is a summary of the standard procedures to be followed and considerations for faculty, staff and trainees as they contemplate requesting leave to participate.

**Considerations:**

- Existing UW, SoM and Department procedures for requesting leave should be followed.
- For those involved in clinical activity, coverage during the proposed leave period needs to be considered and the plan for interim clinical coverage should be included in your leave request
- The plan for interim clinical coverage should include the effects of your absence on your unit, department or other units within any part of UW Medicine. This should be discussed with appropriate Departmental leadership including your service chief, division chief and or chair as appropriate and be communicated to appropriate hospital staff and or leadership.
- For those not involved in clinical coverage, your request should address how your duties will be covered during your requested absence as part of standard departmental leave request approval process.
- Leave status (i.e., with or without pay), while participating in an emergency relief effort, will be determined by the employee's leave entitlement as faculty or staff, in combination with laws and regulations related to activity with military or relief organizations. See FAQs. Employees will need to select paid leave (vacation unless covered under military leave law as outlined below) or unpaid leave as part of request for approval.
- In general, medical benefits for employees will remain in place for short leaves under 30 days. Please see the FAQ below for further information. Benefits that apply to an employee while on an extended leave to participate in an emergency relief effort may be impacted based on various factors such as: the employer, the relief organization joined, which laws apply to the organization, leave status while volunteering and length of leave.

**Procedures:**

- Follow your departments' vacation leave request process to provide notice to your chair, service chief, director/ administrator, and or supervisor as appropriate. The request should include proposed time away and a plan for coverage of any clinical, research, teaching, and/or administrative responsibilities.
- Faculty clinicians who will be involved in clinical activity as part of volunteer activity will need to submit a Site of Practice request and receive approval from their department chair and approval from Dean upon recommendation for approval from the Site of Practice (SOP) committee. CUMG members must also seek SOP approval from the CUMG Board of Directors. The SOP proposal submission form may be found online at [www.depts.washington.edu/uwsop](http://www.depts.washington.edu/uwsop)

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**FAQ's:**

Q Why do I need to complete a Site of Practice request for emergency and relief efforts?

A All UW SOM faculty clinicians are subject to certain limitations on their clinical practice, including limitations on the locations in which they can practice without prior approval. Unless the location of clinical work or organization under which you will be volunteering has already received site of practice approval, review and approval of the request by the Site of Practice Committee is required.

Q If a resident or fellow is interested in volunteering, what are the procedures for processing such a request?

A A resident or fellow must request approval for outside clinical volunteer activity under the UW Moonlighting procedures as outlined in the Resident Position Appointment (RPA) and or Fellow Position Appointment (FPA). For additional information or to view the RPA, FPA and Request for Approval of Moonlighting Activities form, go to [www.gme.washington.edu](http://www.gme.washington.edu).

Q Am I eligible to receive paid leave if I volunteer for a relief effort as part of a national/federal response team such as with the National Medical Disaster System (NMDS)?

A No. Washington's Military Leave Law provides 21 days of paid leave to any state employee who is a member of the Washington National Guard or of the army, navy, air force, coast guard, or marine corps reserve of the United States, or of any organized reserve or armed forces of the United States who is ordered to active duty or active duty training. This law does not apply to volunteers of NMDS or other relief organizations. For additional information about military leave see [https://www.washington.edu/admin/acadpers/admin/military\\_leave.html](https://www.washington.edu/admin/acadpers/admin/military_leave.html).

Q Am I eligible to receive paid leave if I volunteer for a relief effort as part of the military reserves or a National Guard unit?

A If you are a member of a military reserve or National Guard unit that is ordered to active duty to participate in a natural disaster relief effort you will be entitled to 21 days of paid leave under Washington's Military Leave Law. Beyond the 21 days of paid leave, the University's policies allow faculty to take paid leave as provided under the University Handbook. Staff may take paid leave as allowed under their employment program. Staff may also apply for paid leave under the Uniformed Services Shared Leave Pool. See <http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/roles/mgr/leaveholiday/shared-leave.html> for eligibility requirements.

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- Q Will my healthcare and other employment benefits continue if I volunteer for a relief effort as part of a national/federal response team or as part of the military reserves or a National Guard unit?
- A Under USERRA, health benefit coverage will continue for up to 31 days for employees who are on an unpaid leave of absence to participate as part of a relief effort with any organization that qualifies for USERRA coverage. If on an unpaid leave for more than 31 days, employees may elect to continue employer-sponsored healthcare for up to 24 months. Employees with questions regarding benefits during leave may contact the benefits office or inquire of their department administrator/director for assistance. The Dean's Office will assist department administrators and directors in addressing benefit issues.
- Q Can I take paid or unpaid leave to participate in relief efforts with organizations that are not affiliated with any military service or the NMDS?
- A Yes. You may request paid leave or leave without pay. If you participate in a relief effort using paid leave, you maintain benefits coverage as with any other paid leave. If you participate in a relief effort using unpaid leave for an organization that is not covered by USERRA, the UW's standard leave policies would apply and you wouldn't have the additional entitlements as outlined above under USERRA.