

Principles for Classified Bargaining Related to COVID-19

AFT Washington shares our locals' concerns for the health and wellbeing of our members and community during the COVID-19 outbreak in our state. The shutdown of schools and move to either online learning platforms or shut down entirely will have obvious effects on our work, especially those who are hourly workers. Below are areas that AFT Washington locals will want to address in bargaining over the effects of COVID-19. Please do not hesitate to contact your union organizing representative for support, in particular when you wish to Demand to Bargain over the effects of COVID-19 related changes to your working conditions.

Primary concerns when considering a Demand to Bargain

1. Every employee must be held harmless economically and professionally for the dislocation caused by COVID-19. No one should be required to use accumulated and/or compensated leave time to enact the institution's response to coronavirus. Employees who are required to self-isolate or be quarantined should not be required to use personal sick time or other previously available paid leave for this.
2. Paid Administrative Leave should be provided immediately to employees who are in high risk categories as defined by the Center for Disease Control or the local Health Departments. Including those employees that are in close contact with someone in a high-risk category - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/index.html>.
3. Paid Administrative Leave should be provided to employees who are required to care for a child whose school has closed and/or a child who has an IEP.
4. During Paid Administrative Leave, bargaining unit members should continue to accrue all contractual benefits at the same rate as regular working hours.
5. Institutions should make efforts to ensure that employees continue their employment during this crisis and that includes use of emergency reserves – this is an emergency.
6. Institutions should provide the necessary Personal Protection Equipment to those who may be exposed to the COVID-19 virus and increased workload for preventative cleaning should be compensated.
7. Institutions should commit to not contesting unemployment claims made as a result of COVID-19.
8. If an employee does not feel safe continuing to work, employees should have access to all contractual leaves, restrictions on the use of this leave should be lifted, and employees should not face disciplinary actions for using these benefits.
9. For PreK-12 institutions specifically, if an instructional term is extended due to the virus, institutions should be prepared to provide additional compensation for those who would be required to work far into the summer months.

Other considerations for your workplace

1. Schools must keep foremost in mind that their campuses and schools are sanctuaries for many of their students – this may be the only location where students have steady access to food, shelter, safe living quarters, and internet access. Institutions must plan to assist students who do not have viable strategies for relocation from campus or alternatives for online learning.
2. Racism and bigotry have no place in anyone’s response to COVID-19. Institutions, faculty, and unions must condemn instances of racism and bigotry connected to this virus in the same manner and to the same extent they would do so at any other time.
3. All employees must be held harmless as individuals from any issues that may occur when they are utilizing non-institutional computing devices, networks, and other resources in attempts to maintain institutional continuity.