

WSU COVID-19 Town Hall – January 28

Live Unedited Transcript

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>> PHIL: Good morning everyone. Welcome to our 15th in our series of WSU COVID-19 town hall sessions. My name is Phil Weiler, I'm vice president for marketing and communications. I'm happy to serve as the moderator again for this session. This will be the first Covid town hall that we are holding for 2021 and this one I think is a little bit special. We're going to be focusing really squarely on providing tips and advice and resources to caregivers who are having to carry an extra burden during this pandemic. And when we refer to caregivers, we're referring to people who might have young children at home that they have to care for in addition to carrying a school load or a workload. We're also talking about those individuals who might have elders in the home that they might need to care for. So we know that caregivers have some special challenges during COVID-19 and there are resources available, there's advice that we can share and hopefully we're going to come away today with some really practical tips and resources that can help lighten that load somewhat. Before we get started, I want to thank specifically the president's commission on the status of women and the administrative professional advisory council. Both of those groups approached us and asked specifically that we hold a session that was geared toward caregivers. And then they made themselves available to really help us plan and make sure we were hitting the topics that they thought were most important. So thank you to both of those groups for the suggestion and for helping make this session a reality. Let me introduce our panelists, we'll talk a little bit about what we'll be discussing and then we can jump in. First we're joined of course by President Kirk Schulz. Thank you for joining us. We also have provost Elizabeth Chilton. Elizabeth is going to be spending some time talking to us about what the plans are for fall semester. You probably saw in your email that we've got a direction in place so we'd love to hear from Elizabeth on the email that she and the president and the vice president for student affairs sent out earlier this week. Next we have a special guest, we've been joined by Ben Stone. Ben is a public health official with the Whitman County Health Department. Ben is going to talk to us about vaccines, about a website called phase finder, it's a website that was launched recently that will help you figure out when it's appropriate to go in and get a vaccination. There's been a lot of interest around vaccines lately. So Ben can hopefully help provide just a little bit of background for us so we understand what the process looks like. Next we have three colleagues from human resource services with us, Kendra Wilkins, Lisa Gehring, and Ann Monroe. They're going to talk about a variety of resources and services available to WSU caregivers through a variety of different sources. So looking forward to what they have to say. Next Laura Griner Hill is going to talk to us about modified duty options for faculty members who have caregiver duties. And Laura is our senior vice provost. Next the director of the WSU Children's Center in Pullman is going to talk about what parents and caregivers should be looking for if they're trying to find high-quality child care for youngsters they might have in the household. Next we have Sarah Waters. She's been doing

research around discrimination that has been happening because of the pandemic. Today she's going to talk about some different research she's done which I think will be really interesting. She's looking at how parents can communicate issues that might be of emotional nature to young people in a way that is positive that they understand and isn't sort of dismissing the anxieties that people might be feeling. And then finally Mary Wack is going to talk about some services that are available to students who might be caregivers. Again whether they're caring for older adults or young children at home. With that, as we have done in the past, we have asked all participants to provide questions before we got started, we had the website available. We did receive a number of questions again this time around. Those have been shared with all of our panelists and they've used those questions to help put together their presentations for today. And then of course also we have our subject matter experts who are monitoring the chat in YouTube. I'm looking over at that now, we've got about 675 people who are in the YouTube feed and it looks like our subject matter experts are there to answer questions. If you have questions real-time, please feel free to post those in the chat, we should be able to get those answered. With that, let me turn it over to President Schulz, if you can kick us off and then we'll start talking about the meat of the discussion.

>> KIRK SCHULZ: Glad you are joining us. And I remember almost a year ago that we did our first one of these that we thought I hope somebody watches. And it's been amazing to me to see the way we've been able to connect, answer your questions, and hopefully stay a little bit informed during these really challenging times. First I'm very, very proud of our faculty, staff, and students. The resiliency that you all continue to show has been simply amazing. I'm proud every day to be associated with you and we want to make sure today that we talk about ways that we continue to support you not just at work but at home and your entire lives. Keep up the great work, and I'm looking forward to the day when we're back in person, everybody is vaccinated and we have that safe environment that we've all kind of come to expect. I know many of you have lots of questions and will continue to do so. I know Phil will refer to this at the end, but remember we have a website set up that we continue to take questions that come from faculty, staff, and students and put them on there. And I just urge you to consult that website on a frequent basis. We'll keep it very much updated. Finally, since this is supposed to be practical, I want to make a few quick tips. First I want to remind everybody please take care of yourselves as much as you can. I think I was doing an exercise routine the other day and watching a recording and the person on there said taking 30 minutes to exercise for self-health is not a waste of time. Don't look at it like that. Look upon that as an investment in yourself and I think that's an important thing to remember. So a couple of things that I've done recently, it's okay to turn off your social media accounts and to not scroll through them continuously when things are happening. It's okay to not look at the news all the time on your computer or where you're sitting at home. Give yourself only breaks. And I think that's a really important thing especially if you feel stressed and overwhelmed by that, it's okay to check out on some of those things for some period of time. And there's a lot of good healthy reasons to do that. I would also encourage you to have something fun that you can do when you do feel you just need a chance to break away for a few minutes. So I wound up walking our dog around the engineering complex in Pullman. I also just finished *Scorpion's Tail*, it's a novel. I read about 30 minutes a night on something that has zero to do with the work, zero to do with leadership, zero to do

with Washington State. Whatever you find to relieve that stress, give yourself a calming breath, and remember that better times are ahead. So Phil, that's all I have today. I'm proud of our team here at WSU both our leadership, our faculty, our staff, and students. We're going to keep doing everything we can to support you in your educational endeavors and make sure that this is the best workplace it can possibly be throughout the system. Thank you. Go Cougs!.

>> PHIL: Great. Thank you, Kirk. One of the questions I know folks have is what will fall look like. And Elizabeth you and Kirk and Mary Jo sent out an email earlier this week. Can you remind us what that said and what direction we think we'll be taking classes in the fall?

>> ELIZABETH: Thanks very much, Phil. Our email we sent out was aimed at giving a system-wide direction so that then each campus across the state, each chancellor will then send out more communications about exactly what this means for their campus and for their students and faculty and staff. But as a system, we've been really working together to come up with the set of guiding principles that will then guide our decisions on each of the campuses. First and foremost as we communicated we're feeling optimistic about focussing our planning efforts on a more substantive in person classes come fall. That includes the classroom experience as well as outside the classroom. Certainly for the Pullman campus, this semester and last semester we had dozens of classes that were held in person using appropriate PPE and social distancing. And we did not have any cases of Covid spread in the classroom. So we're learning from those and we're going to apply that to the Pullman semester in the fall, expand the number of in person experiences but of course we need to balance that against whatever the health considerations are at the time. I wish I had a crystal ball as to how quickly we can get folks vaccinated and I wish it was tomorrow. But we will be able to adjust our timeline as we learn more about the rollout of the vaccine and see how the cases of Covid are in the state. So we're balancing health considerations for faculty, staff, and students, we're certainly maintaining and enhancing the quality of instruction for students in all cases whether it's fully in person or whether it ends up being a hybrid kind of semester, we're focusing on the quality of education and experience. And then we're also, the focus of today's town hall is really protecting a whole life perspective and paying close attention to equity issues. Because we know will the schools be back in session for example and how will that affect caregivers. So all of those are considerations that guide our focus on our fall planning.

>> PHIL: Great. Thank you, Elizabeth. I like the idea that we've got some principles in place that are going to guide our planning and we have a sense of what the direction is, but there is still work to be done. I was in a meeting yesterday where we were talking about this idea of a potentially phased reopening. And someone made the comment that resonated with me. They talked about the idea that this is not an on and off switch. We're not either all in person or off. It's more like turning a dial. And so we're looking at how do we slowly turn that dial in a safe way to make sure that faculty members and students are safe, that we're keeping our community safe as well. So thanks for the update on that. I know there's a lot of work that will continue to be done as we get closer to those fall dates. I'd like to turn it over now to Ben if I could. As I mentioned Ben Stone is an official with the Whitman County Public Health Department. Ben, I know vaccines are obviously a hot topic around the country. And I think it's safe to say that information about vaccines is literally changing every day. In fact I heard just

yesterday that the Biden Administration had made an announcement about an incremental increase about trying to make vaccines available at the state level. But can you share with us how do vaccines get into people's arms? Where do the vaccines come from? Who is responsible for figuring out how those get distributed? And then talk a little bit as well if you could about this phase finder website that was just recently launched by the state of Washington.

>> BEN: Absolutely. Thank you so much, Phil. And I'm happy to share some information with those who are listening to try and clear up any questions. I know that it has absolutely been a hot topic and Phil is right it changes every day, every hour it feels like. So as much as we can make sure that people are up to speed I think that's really important for everybody. So before I jump into where we're at right now, I'd really like to give a little bit of context to how we got here and why we're at the place that we're at. So before December, so from February to roughly December, our tools for fighting Covid were really limited to those non-pharmaceutical interventions that I think everybody was hearing a lot about back in February and March of last year, those NPI's. And those nonpharmaceutical interventions were things like washing your hands, social distancing, coughing into your sleeve, decreasing the sizes of gatherings, things like that. And all of those were really the tools that we had in order to prevent the spread and prevent any severe morbidity and mortality. And that was really the focus. And that still is the focus now as in December when it started to roll out and we did have some vaccines that became available although limited. That is still the goal is to prevent the spread of Covid and to decrease severe morbidity and mortality. Now in December as these things rolled out, we now had a pharmaceutical intervention. And that's very exciting and that's a really important place to be for us to really start fighting back. Now unfortunately that is still an extremely limited resource. I think everybody is well aware of some of the limits of the vaccine as far as how much there is and it being able to be in everybody's arm as quickly as possible. So with those limits, it's important for people to understand what the process is and some of the mindset behind it and why we're going through the phases in the way that we are. Now similarly to those nonpharmaceutical interventions where our goal was to decrease it moving to those high risk populations who may be at a greater risk of having severe morbidity and mortality, the vaccine has been prioritized in the same way. And so as we started with phase 1A here in Washington State those phases determined by the state department of health and taking a lot of guidance from the CDC and some of their advisory councils, they set up this phased structure. We began with phase 1A which makes a certain amount of sense. And in that phase it was really prioritizing those health care workers who were seeing a lot of patients and who were at risk because of their job. They were there, we needed them in the hospital to take care of this increase in patients. The other focus was those individuals who worked and lived at long-term care facilities around the state. And that is where we have seen the largest amount of severe morbidities and mortalities, outbreaks in these facilities. So for a health care system it was really important to early on do as much as we could with this new pharmaceutical intervention to prevent more severe morbidity and mortality in those populations. Now as we move through these phases, as we get more individuals vaccinated and as hopefully we start to see a lot more vaccine, then we can start to expand it out. But the mindset still stays the same. How are we identifying those areas within our communities and within our state that are most

at risk for both transmitting the disease and having severe outcomes following the disease. And so as we move through these phases, that is where the state department of health has developed and released this phase finder application online. That is at findyourphasewa.org and that's phase finder that I'm sure a lot of individuals have heard about to this point. But to those who haven't, this is just a website where you can go through and answer a few questions about where you work, what your age is, what type of job you have and then that can determine where you are at in this phase process. Now as you're going through that, it's important to really evaluate what you're doing, not so much what your job title may be. And so if you are interacting with individuals on a regular basis where you cannot socially distance due to the nature of your job, if you are dealing with high-risk populations, any of those guidelines that the state has put out, phase finder will help you dig through and understand what your answers will be that best reflect your job and your situation. So as you go through that phase finder website application, once you get to the end of that, there's 1 of 2 options. So you will either be eligible and it will give you a screen that says you are eligible to receive the vaccine. You can print that out, take a screenshot, show it to one of those providers and it will give you a list of enrolled providers in your area, in your county, that are approved by the state of Washington to both receive and administer vaccine. Now one important point is for those who are eligible, unfortunately we are still dealing with a very limited resource as it relates to vaccines. And so while you may be eligible unfortunately the supply does not mean that everyone who is currently eligible will be able to get a vaccine immediately. It's important to be aware of that, understand that it may take some time just because there's not much of it around right now. But to be calling those providers and trying to get scheduled there and making sure that you do get vaccinated because it is going to be really important. Now for those individuals who may not be eligible right now, at the end of the phase finder tool, you'll be able to sign up with either your phone number or email and you can receive a notification for when your phase does open up. This is another really important component for people to remember is that when you do sign up and you can get those notifications, that means you won't need to be checking back. You won't need to be continually calling your provider asking am I eligible now, because as Phil said it is changing very, very quickly. And once it does change and they make that change reflected in that phase finder app, you'll be able to receive a notification. It will say you're eligible right now, here's you can go to try to get scheduled. Understanding that the schedules are a little bit drawn out right now just due to the amount of vaccine. As we move through the vaccination process, there's going to be lots of changes. There's going to be still limited supply. Right now we are expecting some of those supply concerns to persist for a little while longer, though we are hearing that it may start to slowly open up which is going to be very helpful. I will say for Whitman County, the partnerships that we've had with our health care providers and our health care community at large have really allowed us to increase our capacity based on the amount of vaccine we get in here. And I know that a lot of different counties, a lot of health care providers around the State of Washington are working to make sure that when they get vaccine they are working to get it out and into people's arms as quickly as possible. Now the scarcity of the vaccine that we currently have, it does mean we're not going to be at 70% herd immunity tomorrow. So as we're moving through that and as we're getting to that place, it's still very important for all of us to use those nonpharmaceutical interventions that have been successful to date. It is still important to socially distance, to still wear your masks in public. To

still make sure that you're taking all of the precautions that we have been for the last 11 months even though vaccine is rolling out. And it does mean that those who may be eligible and who have been vaccinated, there is unfortunately very little information and more data is coming in day by day to get a clearer picture of what this is going to look like. But at this time we just can't be 100% confident that you won't be able to spread it. We are very clear that the vaccine is an amazing intervention to prevent severe morbidity and mortality. But there are still studies ongoing to make sure that individuals cannot be spreading it, and with the limited amount of vaccine and those individuals vaccinated, it's still going to be important to stick with those nonpharmaceutical interventions. Where we're at now, we have a bigger toolkit and it's very helpful that we can use a lot of these different tools and different interventions to fight back on Covid. But as we move through it, it will take some time and it will take a lot of partnerships and teamwork and a little bit of grace for health care providers, for everybody who's working through this process as quickly as possible. So thank you so much, Phil. I'm really happy to be here and any questions, we're happy to try and make sure that people are aware of where we're at and we're going to be going.

>> PHIL: Great. Thank you, Ben. I really appreciate it. That was very helpful. I did note looking over at the chat in Youtube, I see our dean of students actually listed the website there. Again it is findyourphaseswa.org. And like I said the link is in the chat. So you can see it there if you haven't already had a chance to work your way through it. I think there's a couple of things worth echoing what Ben just said which is even after you do get that second dose of the vaccine, at this stage we're going to need people to continue to be following those four W's, washing your hands, wearing your masks, watching your distance. We need to avoid meeting in groups, and we need to avoid unnecessary travel. So even after the vaccine, we're not out of the woods yet. But I think we're starting to see the end of this, may take several months before we get there. But we need to really double down on those as you said nonpharmaceutical interventions that we all have control over ourselves to make sure that we reduce the spread, make sure we're not getting other people sick and keeping ourselves safe as well. With that I'd like to turn it over to Kendra and Lisa and Ann. Talk to us if you could about all of the different resources that we have available for WSU employees in particular who might be caregivers for older adults or for children. I know there's a lot to view, I know there's a very exhaustive website that's available. But folks may not have seen that. So if you could introduce us to some of that so if we want more information we know where to go and what it looks like.

>> KENDRA: Absolutely. Thanks, Phil. Over almost the past, gosh, year now, we have seen an increasing number of individuals needing to take care of themselves or family members and also be present to care for their kids because their school or their place of care has been closed because of COVID-19 reasons. So many employees over the past year were able to participate in a variety of COVID-19 resources and programs including the Federal Government's Department of Labor FFCRA or families first Coronavirus act which provided for some paid sick leave and emergency family medical leave expansions. This leave provided for a limited amount of paid leave for employees impacted by certain events, but the mandatory program ended on December 31, 2020. Now that doesn't mean that there aren't any other resources available. And what we've done within human resource services and the disability services side is provided those resources that the state of Washington continues to provide in a variety of

different options such as expanded shared leave program and high risk employee worker rights or accommodations for persons who may not be able to work on site for certain medical reasons. Now on the disability services website which one of our moderators will be sharing in the chat for us, we have a page that's called COVID-19 leave and work options. This is a compilation of all of the different options available in the State of Washington as well as special to WSU that we've put together. Now of course this page is changing almost weekly as we continue to watch the new items that our governor has provided through proclamations and we are continuing to watch the federal Department of Labor sites for any changes that might modify different options that we have. Additionally on that site we have put together a quick reference guide that provides for a variety of potential leave options for employees who may need leave for these COVID-19 events. So if somebody needs to be out to care for themselves or care for others or it's related to school closures or day care closures, it identifies can somebody take annual leave or sick leave or maybe the family medical leave act. Putting that on one sheet per se and people can always contact disability services to ask us additional questions. Now besides the COVID-19 leave options, people continue to need to be out for a variety of different reasons. And so we have all types of different leave programs or other programs such as were brought up earlier for persons to work in different locations. Employees who are on approved medical leave such as family medical leave can take that on a full time or part time or intermittent basis that works for their needs or their family's needs. We can work with departments on particular options that are available to them like what if any work might be available and also from where. Because of course that is a current concern in our Covid environment where we have people working on site all the time, on site part of the time, at home part of the time and all the time as well. So I guess with that for those persons who may not necessarily also need leave but may need other work options, I'm going to turn this over to Lisa who is our HRS assistant vice president to provide more information.

>> LISA: Thank you, Kendra. So currently teleworking remains the preferred option at this time. So WSU employees who can telework without hampering WSU operations we still want you to do so in coordination with your supervisor. And when the time comes and hopefully very soon that we'll be able to transition back to working at a WSU work location, HRS will provide additional training and resources so we have a successful transition back. And as Kendra noted we have a significant amount of information on our HRS website, so if you have any difficulty finding information or if you have a specific situation you would like to discuss, please don't hesitate to contact our office. One of the questions that we receive quite frequently is related to flexible work schedules and can an employee work something other than the standard 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. And our response is yes, supervisors should consider flexible work schedules because we do have many employees who are struggling to juggle multiple priorities, caregiver needs, work priorities, and sometimes just a modified schedule can help them balance that work life. And employees and supervisors should discuss how to meet the performance expectations and deadlines outside of the traditional 8:00 to 5:00 work schedule. And regardless of schedule, employees should know what's expected of them as an employee, what are the deadlines, and it's important that that line of communication between supervisors and employees remain open. It may not be possible to provide a flexible schedule to all employees, however HRS is always available to collaborate with supervisors and employees to talk about

what different options may be available. And just a quick reminder as an option, we have to comply with state ethic laws and be accountable for accurately reporting our time worked or any leave taken. The second question we get frequent, even though not directly tied to caregiving, but we have where kids are at home on the home computer and we have employees trying to work, there may not be enough resources for everybody. So we get questions related to teleworking and who should be providing the equipment and the resources for an employee to telework. And even though a formal telework agreement is not required at this time for the Covid-related teleworking, supervisors and employees can still reference our teleworking policy which is business policies procedures manual 6034. So this policy specifically addressed responsibility for the cost of equipment utilities and for the maintenance. So this is something the employee and the supervisor should be in discussion. And if the resources aren't there, how do we obtain the resources and again HRS is available to assist if there's questions. And so now I'm going to turn the presentation over to Ann Monroe who is our director of benefit services to discuss other important benefit information.

>> ANN: Thank you, Lisa. And hello everybody. Nice to speak with you again today. I just wanted to kind of segue a little bit off of what Kendra and Lisa were talking about and move into caregiving as well. But with the different leave, people sometimes will become concerned if they're having to take ongoing leave or they may not be able to work as much as they normally do, how is that eventually going to end up impacting their benefit eligibility. And I just wanted to send a quick reminder that as long as somebody is in paid status, eight hours a month as a benefit eligible employee, most likely they're going to be maintaining their benefit eligibility. And there's a lot of leave provisions out there that can be utilized right now. And we do everything we can to make sure that that component is not being impacted for our employees because that's pretty crucial right now. We've actually had very few people during the last ten months that have lost eligibility due to Covid reasons and so I'm really happy to see that because again this is a time when people need to have that additional security of knowing their benefits will remain in effect. Another thing of course that we want to recognize through all of this is that regardless of where someone's working, if they're working at the job site or if they're working at home, a lot of people are experiencing feelings and emotions that they maybe normally weren't experiencing prior to this time. And this kind of loops back to what Kirk was talking about at the very beginning. We have social isolation, we have people with anxiety, work-life boundaries are sometimes getting blended. The ongoing care for children and perhaps parents, and it's important that through all of this in addition to taking care of those that are relying upon you, be it your family or your employer, that you're making sure you're taking care of yourself in the midst of all of this as well. We have provided a lot of information as already has been discussed on our websites. One of the links I would like to share with you here if I can successfully pull it up is we do have a website called caring for self and others. The moderator should be putting this in the comment section. And this is a good spot to land. Actually if you land on a lot of different locations on the HRS website it will direct you back to other resources that will be available to you. I think this quote over here is really important, self-care is not selfish. You cannot serve as an empty vessel. And so you really, really do need to make sure you're taking care of yourself. One of the other resources that you're going to find on this site is it will link you out to the EAP source which we also utilize a lot. They have some great

resources, they have trainings, they have quick little webinars that you could attend. They have white pages that you could read. A lot of information out there that they're focussing a lot on employees in the state of Washington help assist us through this difficult time. And then as you go down, you're beginning to find how can you care for yourself, how can you care for ourselves. And we do try to ensure that we update this staff when more information becomes available. But it was just a quick, I wanted to make sure you were aware of it. And it's a quick resource that you could go visit to learn more about the self-care options that we offer through the university. I think another important thing to realize right now is that even though we have a lot of stress and anxiety in our lives, there's actually been some positive components that have come out from the different work life balance that we are having. For example you'll hear people say wow, I don't have to do that daily commute anymore or I'm actually finding that when I'm at home, I get up and move around a heck of a lot more than I was if I was sitting at work. And so those are just little things that may not seem like a big deal, but if we're moving more and that's kind of good for our self-health that we're taking a moment to breathe even if it's that child or even a pet that's distracted us from something that we can breathe and we realize, gosh, I haven't had a cup of water for a while. Maybe I need to go get a drink of water or move. There's some positive things we're experiencing through all of this as well. And people making comments about it is kind of rejuvenating their minds and they're thinking about things a little differently that they maybe are experiencing something different in their normal work life. Most of us may have a combination of both. Some of us may have pro experiences, some of us may have con experiences. And of course whenever possible, it's great to focus on the positives. But if you see the cons, make sure you're looking for ways that you can help yourself out as well. And one of those is if you go to these different resources we found and you're like man that's just not fitting my need, remember that all of the Washington State University insurance plans we offer do offer counseling services. So if you need to sit down and talk to somebody, talk things through, take advantage of those opportunities. I'm actually going to make a little plug here about how my particular team is ensuring that we're not social distancing regardless of where we work. We're in touch way more since work day has gone live than we have been in a long time and we have daily Zoom meetings. We have ongoing IM conversations which are very supportive, motivational, we're helping each other out. Some people catch onto things a little bit quicker than others and they're helping train and uplift the rest of the team. And of course it's a great opportunity for us as a university statewide community to realize that we still have opportunities to exercise compassion, patience, and understanding as we're all learning this together. But I was just thinking about that, I was like we're pretty good about staying in touch, but since work day has been rolled out, we're staying in touch a lot more. And I think that can be seen as a very positive thing in terms of our various work units across the university. So those are a couple of thoughts that I had today, Phil. And thank you for the opportunity to join the conversation.

>> PHIL: Thank you to Ann and Lisa and Kendra. And also I want to give a shout out to the folks who are representing human resource services on the chat. There are quite a few links and resources available there if you wanted to follow up on any of that, those links are there. Also it's clear that human resource services has put a lot of effort into trying to compile all of these resources, these services and programs into one place so it's easier for people to access them.

So thanks to our colleagues in HRS. I'd like to turn now if I could to Laura. And Laura, could you talk to us about options that faculty might have if they feel they need to modify their duties because of dependent care responsibilities they might have at home.

>> LAURA: Yes. Thank you, Phil. Good morning everyone and thank you for joining us today. In collaboration with human resource services and Kendra, Lisa have all helped with this. We've added caregiver responsibilities to our list of circumstances for which faculty may request modified duties. When faculty have been granted modification of duties, they're not on leave, they're still fully employed and fully paid. But the usual mix of a faculty member's work is altered away from less flexible duties to more flexible ones. I'm sorry, you're hearing my cat in the background. For example modified duties might include relief from service obligations for an academic term or support for teaching such as co-teaching with advanced graduate students and substitute duties might include revision of a curriculum, preparation of a research proposal, help with accreditation documents and so on. And the modifications and substitutions you would negotiate with your chair or director. There are already a number of different reasons why faculty may request modified duties and I think not a lot of faculty are aware of them so I encourage you to go look at the website and that will be posted by vice provost Craig Parks in the chat. The new circumstance for which faculty are encouraged to request modified duties is when they're responsible for dependent care due to COVID-19. Eligible faculty may request up to two academic terms for significant dependent care responsibilities as related to COVID-19. And as Phil mentioned earlier dependents include people of all ages including children, children with disabilities, and dependant adults and elders. So please talk to your chair or director if you think this might be a good option for you. You can find more information on the provost web page under policies and then under policies and procedures. Again this should be posted in the chat. You can also find information more generally on modified duties on faculty modified duties on the HRS website. And we'll send out an email with information about this sometime next week. So that's it and thank you and have a look and I hope it helps.

>> PHIL: Great, thanks, Laura. I did see Craig did in fact post that to the website. Based on what I'm seeing from the comments in the chat, I think folks want your kitty to have their own panelist spot on our next town hall. We'll have to see if the kitty is available for the next one. With that, I'd like to next have Heather talk to us about child care. For me as a parent child care was always a concern. I wanted to make sure my kids were in a place that was safe and nurturing for them. And I think with COVID-19 now it becomes even more of a challenge. Some schools are moving toward face to face instruction, others aren't. I think parents have nervousness about when the time comes for parents or caregivers to return to the workplace, they want to make sure they've got child care. So Heather, talk to us if you can, what are your tips, what are your advice on what caregivers should do if they're looking for high quality child care for their youngsters?

>> HEATHER: Thank you, Phil. I appreciate the question. First thing I want to mention is to remind you as you're caring for children or someone in your home to remember you're modelling resiliency, folks. Take a breath, take a moment, pause, and recognize that you're not just trying to balance work and life or integrating work and life, you're also modelling for your children how to handle situations that are new. And so I appreciate what you all are doing and I

want to acknowledge that as we move forward. Finding child care is challenging at any time and right now whether you're a new parent, new to the area, trying to work remotely or coming back into the workforce, it can be challenging. But there are resources out there. And often we share that term high quality. So I wanted to share with you, it is more than word of mouth. But there are resources out there, and there are weighting scales. So for Washington State, most states have a quality rating improvement system. But Washington State, that's done through a program called early achievers. So as you're looking at child care centers, contacting them, asking them questions, they might mention early achievers. And most of our licensed child care centers are in the committed to high quality to thriving in high quality areas so we're very fortunate here. Across the state in Washington and Idaho there are systems. You can look to see is this program going to meet the high quality your family needs. In Idaho, their program is called Idaho stars. And they have participating to just a seedling and budding up through deeply rooted. So that's the way they view their system. And when you go to these two websites, you can find more details on what is the licensing status, what are health and safety inspection reports, how do they communicate with families, do they have good child outcomes, and what are they doing to help children prepare to be successful in school. So there are rating systems out there when you're talking about how quality. And I just wanted to share that language. And with finding child care, like I said it's been challenging in the past, but now with Covid there's more regulations in place. We've had to reduce our group size. So there are ratios and requirements and that's why finding spots in centers is challenging at times because there's a certain number of children to teacher ratio. And teachers in the past could go from room to room and help support other classrooms, however now we've minimized the risk to exposure of COVID-19 by not having teachers go from room to room and keeping small pods of children together. So one thing I wanted to mention briefly just for supervisors out there and those of you who are new to child care, there have been some changes that have affected parents and some of the feedback I've gotten for how do we handle this. One is if a child is ill in a group care setting, there are requirements that the child needs to remain out of care typically for 24 hours before they can return to group care. With Covid that has changed for most centers to be at least 72 hours. So although your child might be on the mend of a cold or something they may have, there is a required amount of time that they need to be out of care. So that is happening as well as centers who needed to close for Covid-related issues. Some centers mentioned they've been a few days, ten days, 14 days. Knock on wood our children's center has not had to close yet so we're hoping to keep that going with the great work of the parents and staff there. Looking for child care, there is a great resource, it's child care aware of America. That is a resource across the nation that will help you narrow down what is your family's needs, what are you looking for, you can look up information about licensing status, what is the quality, and how many spaces do they have available which is the biggest question everyone has. Directors are required to keep this up to date with how many spaces are available. And so I recommend you go to that site. If you're looking locally also you can go to DCYF for Washington and there are resources there for families, finding child care, checking on the status of the quality of that child care. There may be financial assistance for your family, so that would be indicated there if you are eligible. Also what programs are available in your community for early childhood education assistance program or head start for young children. There are programs not just for group licensed child care but also for friends, family, and neighbor programs that there may be

financial assistance for or if you're doing a partnership with neighbors. And also the school age programs. School age is very interesting right now as we're hoping that will remain successful. Talking to your child care now, what are the plans if things need to go back to being a virtual program so that you can be supported at work and trying to balance everything. And then most importantly there are resources, as a parent, parenting is hard work. It's the biggest job we have and there are resources on ways to help your child through their development, resources on how to navigate change, how to talk to your child about different issues and how to support you as you're supporting your child in their journey. The biggest point I wanted to make as we talk about child care is waitlist. Get on a waitlist. And a waitlist does not guarantee that a spot is going to be provided for your family when you think you need that spot provided, but being on a waitlist allows the center to notify you when spaces are coming up. So typically we ask that people give us two weeks or a month's notice before they're going to disenroll from a program. And that allows the centers to then contact the next people on the waitlist. Some waitlists are very substantial. Here at the children's center, our waitlist is larger than our enrollment currently. That doesn't mean give up hope, but that means have other plans, talk to your neighbors, to your families about safe ideas you can do in the interim. You can be on more than one waitlist, that's all right. Some do charge for that, some do not. But get on it early, check it often, and feel free to contact the centers locally, although we're not doing tours currently in the centers because parents are not coming in, we can Zoom through the hallways, show you the classrooms, share information with you. And in talking with the other directors in the region, that is what they're doing as well. They're trying to work with families the best we can and continue to provide a safe environment for the children. The other piece is to think about unexpected closures and to plan ahead by talking to your supervisors, your coworkers about what your projects are, what your timeline is. But again while you're trying to balance or integrate work and family life, I recommend taking a pause, finding what resources are out there and looking for this case of situations of you can get on lists early and plan ahead. And if you have more questions, I'd love for you to contact us. But child care is going to be a resource that will provide most of the answers for you if not looking at your local friends and family. Thank you.

>> PHIL: Great. Thank you, Heather. I don't know that the child care aware website existed when my kids were young but I wish it did because it sounds like that's a great resource. I encourage folks to take a look at that if they do have child care needs. I'd like to turn our conversation to Sarah Waters now if I could. Sarah, I know it's natural for adults to want to protect their kids from emotional distress and I know in my experience when my children would say what's wrong, you'd say oh everything is fine. You've done some research that finds that parents aren't as good at hiding that emotional distress as they may think they are. So could you talk to us, what are the findings, the conclusions you've come to from our research around how well parents can really hide emotion from their children and maybe give us some tips on how to have a healthy conversation so that if a child is expressing concern or if they feel that the parents are feeling stress, how a parent and child or how caregiver and child can talk about that in a productive way?

>> SARA: Yes, absolutely. So thanks for having me. And I'm really happy to be here and echo and expand a little bit on a lot of what the other leaders of our university have already talked

about today. This is a really challenging time for a lot of families and the importance of balancing the obligations that we have and the caregiving commitments that we have with care for ourselves as well. So I'm going to share just one slide that I put together here. And what we know from really a lot, many years of research on children's resilience, is that the most powerful sources of resilience in children's lives are these close, stable relationships that they have with responsive adult caregivers. So when children have the sense of safety and security that these relationships provide, then they have a place that they know they can go to help manage their strong negative emotions. Then children are able to navigate even really pretty adverse circumstances successfully. So in this time of Covid where there are numerous challenges and sometimes it feels like the challenges are changing almost day-to-day or week to week in terms of what families are navigating, this relationship that children have with their caregivers, if they're dependable, that they're present, that they see kids and create that safe space to talk about and process emotions is going to be key to developing the resilience that we all want our children to have. Because as much as we want to protect our kids from having to face any adversity, that's really not realistic in our world. And so I think what we want to recognize is even more important is that we foster the ability for kids to adapt and cope when they do face adversity, that they know they have those resources inside of them. So in our efforts to provide that responsive kind of bond or relationship with our kids, we really need to remember just how sensitive children are to the emotional well being of their caregivers. We've done research that's shown that children can catch as we call it caregivers' stress. So when we have brought families into the lab and we've asked parents to go through a mildly stressful task and then we reunite mothers with their children and we see that that physiological stress, things like a heart rate are transmitted from the mother to a child. Even a baby as young as 12 months old, we see changes in their heart rate and their fight or flight response based on the stressor that their mother experienced that they never experienced themselves. In a recent study we took the group of mothers and they had all gone through this mild stressor and we asked half of them to try to hide their stress, hide their feelings, mask or suppress their feelings when they were interacting with their children and these kids were older so they were able to have conversations, they were 7 to 11 years old. So they were able to talk about various things, play together and things like that. And what we found is that the moms who tried to hide their stress because we asked them to, actually transmitted stress to their children through this elevated fight or flight response more than the mothers who were able to express their emotions freely. I think this can sound a bit scary to think how do I protect my kids from stress, if they can tell that I'm stressed even when I try to say no, no everything is fine. So rather than these findings being something that actually stresses parents out even more, I like to think of them as an invitation for caregivers to practice emotional resilience themselves. Actually Heather sort of already set me up for this in what she was talking about in that when we support our own resilience we are then better able to support our children's own resilience. This means that we really need to pay attention to our bodies so that we can identify how we're really feeling. Dr. Dan Seagle who has written a lot about this and has some really nice videos that you can find on Youtube uses the phrase name it to tame it when talking about managing stress and negative emotions. So we have to understand how we're feeling to begin coping with them. So both for ourselves and for our children, we can talk about our strong negative emotions in honest, age-appropriate ways. We can say rather than saying no, no

everything is fine, which actually teaches kids, we know that they're picking up on our stress so when we say no, no, we're fine, we're actually telling them no, you're wrong. Your cues that are telling you something is off are inaccurate and you shouldn't listen to them. And I don't think that's really the message that we want to send. So instead we can share that we're having these strong negative emotions with our children in age-appropriate ways. And then we can help them see how we manage and regulate those emotions in healthy ways. So maybe we take some deep breaths or listen to some soothing music or take a walk or something that kind of helps us regulate and reset in ourselves, that's a really powerful model and also permission for children to do something similar for themselves. And that's actually the way that we help manage our stress and also build our skills long term to be able to do this. So it's okay to not be okay right now. That's true for kids and that's true for parents and caregivers. Being able to say this is really hard, this is really scary, let's figure out, let's hug, let's talk about it, let's take some deep breaths together to honor that space and create that space for kids and caregivers to feel these strong feelings is our path forward in resilience. And so I just want to mention specifically in like this time of Covid, we need to be really thoughtful about how much of the news and social media and even conversations between adults that our children are indirectly picking up on, that can be very scary especially when we don't talk about or address them specifically. But that's also true for ourselves, how much of these often troubling news stories are we taking in ourselves? Are we staying informed or slipping into doom scrolling or obsessing over things that just kind of ramp up our anxiety and we don't have a lot of control over. So just like you'd want to kind of monitor that for your children, monitor it for yourself as well. Those two things are really, really related. And then other things that we know help calm our nervous system and help us regulate stress, things like spending time outside, we know especially in green spaces in nature, that helps kids thrive. It also helps calm adults and help them stay in the moment which is where coping really happens and also where these really close emotional bonds and moments between parents and children, that's what really feeds kids' resilience. That's where that happens too is in just moment to moment being together. I'll end with saying there are some links here with some useful information about stress and coping and resilience in a bunch of different formats so informational briefs, podcast, little videos, different things to help us build up our own resilience as we also are fostering our kids' resilience.

>> PHIL: Great. Thank you, Sarah. I was looking forward to what you had to say because I figured you were going to have some good information for us. Mary, speaking of children, I'm interested in learning more about options that we might have for students who might have children at home that they're trying to care for or elders as well. Are there resources that we have available for students who are trying to maintain progress toward their degree while also having to care for loved ones at home?

>> MARY: Yeah, thank you. Sure thing, Phil. We do have academic support resources. They're available to students across the WSU system. But I think the ones I've selected can particularly benefit students with care-giving responsibilities. You can think of these resources as forms of academic self-care that are there to tap into as part of taking care of yourself holistically. So students who have care-giving responsibility may absolutely crave structured time for study and benefit from tips on organizing their very limited time for best results. The academic success and career center has some online services to help out there. They have on demand

workshops, time management, motivation, procrastination, learning strategies and more, and a link will go into the chat shortly where you can tap into those workshops. You can access these online any time that's convenient for you. Now if you'd like more personalized support, you can sign up for academic coaching. A coach will walk you through your academic roadblocks, help you make the most of your study time and we'll put a link in the chat for that service as well. Academic coaches don't provide tutoring, but we have you covered in the most popular and challenging subjects. We've got tutoring online and for extended hours. Typically that's noon to 9:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. And those services are offered by the writing center, the math learning center, this semester now the chemistry learning center and a whole range of subjects are available through the academic success and career center. And over the next couple of minutes those links will be dropped into the chat. Now if those hours don't match your needs, there are other options. WSU belongs to an e-tutoring consortium that covers a wide range of subjects, seven by 24. So if the time you have for studies is at 1:00 in the morning and you need live tutoring help, you can get yourself signed up with e-tutoring and give live help in the middle of the night. You can also leave questions for tutors and they'll get back to you and we'll drop that link in the chat as well. The writing center has also developed a flexible feedback process on your writing that doesn't require an appointment or a Zoom meeting at a set time. Drop a paper in the email any time and you'll get feedback sent back to you. Now we know that caregiving can create financial stress and that can have a negative impact on your grades, even on your health, and limit your ability to be involved in your education. We have some free educational resources and financial planning tools that are available online any time. You can access them through the cougar money matters website and we'll put that one in the chat. Now the name of the platform is I grab. And once you sign up you have access to free budgeting tools and educational materials such as tips for single parents in school, tax breaks for parents, or handling elder care financial issues. And just a reminder, as long as we're talking about money that our employment platform handshake is open to all students and contains job listings for any point in your study. Sign up at wsu.joinhandshake.com. We'll drop that in the chat. Finally don't forget the virtual career fair February 9th and 10th. It's open to all, free, and you don't have to travel to talk to employers and to get job links. That is through the academic success and career center and the link will be provided. I wish you the very best for a successful semester where you have some academic self-care options available for you. Thanks, Phil.

>> PHIL: Wow. Thank you, Mary. I had no idea there were all of those resources available. I'm looking at the chat here, there's a dozen different sets of resources available for students. So any students who are on the line with us, please check those out. It looks like there is a lot of support available for you. So thank you for that. Kirk, I'd like to turn it over to you if you've got any closing remarks and then I think we'll be done for the day.

>> KIRK: Thank you. And it's great to hear from my colleagues about all of the different resources that we have for faculty, staff, and students. And I just encourage you all to go back, relook at the Youtube, look at the things in the chats, use those resources, and if there's just something else that we didn't cover or that you have other questions about, please all of the folks that were on here today I know would be more than happy to answer additional questions afterward. So continue to take care of yourselves, be resilient, wear your mask, wash your

hands, stay six feet apart, and let's be safe, cougs. Really appreciate everyone being with us today. Thanks, Phil.

>> PHIL: Great. Thank you, Kirk. And again I want to thank the president's Commission on the Status of Women and the Academic Advisory Council for suggesting today's topic. There was a lot for us to cover, we've gone a little bit over. Thank you all for sticking with us, I think it was good information. Also want to thank in addition to our panelists who made their time available, also thank those subject matter experts who have been providing a lot of resources in detail in the Youtube chat. Finally just one more note, something the President mentioned earlier on, if you do have COVID-19-related questions, please check out the COVID-19 WSU website. You need to go to wsu.edu and there's a link off our home page that will take you to that site. We have a variety of resources, frequently asked questions, all of the latest information, it's a great resource for you to check out. One thing that's new on that website is a dashboard that was launched within the last week or so that looks at the Pullman Campus in particular and gives folks an idea of how many tests have been conducted on the Pullman campus what's the positivity rate, what's the availability of sequestered space, there's quite a bit of information there. Good news is that this is a website that's updated on a daily basis. As of today our positivity rate is at 1.8%. The goal always is to keep positivity below 5% so the fact that we're at 1.8% is great news. So thank you to our students, faculty, and staff on the Pullman campus who have been really following those nonpharmaceutical interventions and washing hands, keeping their physical distance, avoiding groups, and avoiding unnecessary travel. So with that again thank you to all of you for joining us. We appreciate you spending your time. Have a great week and go Cougs.