

This guidance document, drafted by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR), complies with applicable laws, policies and memoranda of understanding governing state operations.

## HEALTH OF STATE EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES

### Staying Safe

#### **What precautions can be taken by state workers to protect themselves?**

In order to reduce the spread of viruses (including COVID-19) at work, some important and necessary steps can be taken by all employees to protect themselves and those around them.

Employees should:

- Engage in safe physical distancing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay away from work, school or other people if sick with respiratory-like symptoms, such as a fever, sore throat and/or cough.
- Follow guidance from public health officials, especially Stay at Home orders.

Employees should work with their supervisor/manager on options for telework and flexible work schedules, and/or their human resources office on leave options.

Employees can self-screen to lessen community spread of COVID-19. The self-screening process involves employees taking their temperature and recognizing if they have shortness of breath, sore throat and/or a cough. Employees with these symptoms or that have a recorded temperature of greater than 100.4 degrees, should stay home and work with their supervisor/manager on alternate work arrangements and leave options.

#### **Do employees need to wear a face mask or face covering?**

At this time, face covers are recommended; however, it is not a substitute for existing guidance about safe physical distancing and frequent handwashing. For more additional information on face covers, visit [CDPH Face Covering Guidance](#).

#### **Is increased cleaning of state buildings taking place?**

The Department of General Services (DGS) started a more frequent and rigorous disinfectant regime focused on high-touch surfaces, paying extra attention to surfaces in public areas such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, bathroom fixtures, etc. In addition, DGS is ensuring public hand sanitizer dispensers are in all DGS-managed state offices. Within state-leased buildings, DGS contacted lessors to determine what actions lessors are taking to ensure that public areas are cleaned regularly, and that hand sanitizer dispensers are available in their buildings.

## State Workers Deployed for COVID-19

### **Various employees have been deployed for COVID-19 response. What actions should be taken to protect staff that are deployed?**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance refers to standard precautions in healthcare settings to protect healthcare workers from infection and prevent the spread of infection from patient to patient. Standard precautions include:

- Perform hand hygiene with alcohol-based hand rub before and after all patient contact, contact with potentially infectious material, and before putting on and upon removal of personal protective equipment. Use soap and water if hands are visibly soiled.
- Follow respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette principles.
- Use PPE whenever there is an expectation of possible exposure to infectious material.

The California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) aerosol transmissible diseases standard that covers healthcare workers should be followed by the healthcare facilities and workers in those facilities. Information on the standards for protecting workers from COVID-19 is available within the [Cal OSHA Guidance to Protect Workers](#).

Additionally, the CDC provides additional guidance on how to prepare before, during and after staff deployment within the [CDC Guidance on Deployment of Staff](#).

### **What actions, if any, should be taken for a deployed employee's return to the office?**

Employees need to have their risk assessed depending on whether there was contact with a known case and whether appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was worn. CDC risk assessment guidelines are located at: [CDC Risk Assessment after Travel- Associated COVID 19 Exposure](#) and risk assessment guidelines for healthcare personnel are located at: [CDC Risk Assessment for Healthcare Personnel](#).

## Employees Reporting Illness or Symptoms

### **What if an employee reports they have tested positive for COVID-19?**

Each department should have a single point of contact that will:

- Coordinate communication within the Department and Agency.
- Contact Local Public Health Office to confirm/inform of positive case and obtain guidance to compare/confirm with latest CDPH guidance.
- Coordinate internal communication emails to human resources, labor relations, and employees that may be at risk.
- Inform support operations to coordinate additional cleaning needs depending on situation (DGS, leased facility, or state building).
- Ensure absenteeism is reported through the GovOps tracker.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, departments should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by applicable health and privacy laws and rules.

**What if an employee develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath, severe fatigue, muscle aches, headache, sore throat, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea)?**

An individual's healthcare provider exercises discretion on whether to test an individual with symptoms of COVID-19. That decision may be based on the clinical presentation, availability of tests, or other external factors. Currently in California, CDPH recommends prioritizing testing for hospitalized patients, residents and staff of long-term care facilities and other congregate settings, and healthcare personnel. Some individuals with mild symptoms who do not require hospitalization may therefore be asked to stay home instead of entering a healthcare facility for care and testing.

If an employee reports symptom(s) consistent with COVID-19 while in the workplace, the employee should be isolated from others, provided a mask to wear (if available), and sent home (or to a medical provider, if needed), as soon as possible. Employees should work with their supervisors to discuss all viable options for telework or leave availability as recommended by the local public health office and in coordination with their human resources office.

**Can I require a doctor's note from an employee to make sure they do not have COVID-19?**

All requests for doctor's notes must follow state policies, laws and memoranda of understanding (MOU). If not deviating from policy, laws and MOU, CDC recommends not requiring a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

**Can I ask for specifics on an employee's illness when they call in sick?**

You must follow sick leave policies and MOU in requesting information on employee illnesses. You may only request information on prognosis (i.e., symptoms, duration, anticipated return and any restrictions), not diagnosis. Employers must maintain all information about employee illness as a confidential medical record in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**If an employee calls in sick and expresses that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 due to travel or contact, what should I do?**

Supervisors must provide the reported information to your human resources office to determine if any action is needed and handle any further communication with the employee. Relevant information in assessing employee risk includes: 1) whether employee had exposure to someone with COVID-19 (testing confirmed or pending), 2) environment and proximity in which exposure occurred, and 3) length of time of exposure. CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment may be helpful in assessing potential employee exposures: [CDC Public Recommendations for Community Related Exposure](#).

In cases in which employees have had close contact with a person with fever or cough who does not have confirmed or pending testing for COVID-19, employees should consult with their medical provider or [local public health department](#) about actions to take based on community transmission of COVID-19 and individual circumstances. Reasonable approaches may be teleworking for 14 days post-exposure or working onsite with a mask and active self-monitoring for symptoms.

Employees should contact their supervisors to discuss all viable options for telework or leave availability as recommended by the local public health office and in coordination with your human resources office.

### **What should I do if an employee arrives to work and is visibly sick?**

The employee should be isolated from others, provided a mask to wear (if available), and encouraged to go home and contact their medical provider, as soon as possible. They should also be provided viable telework options and referred to their human resources office for information on leave options. See [Cal OSHA Guidance Page 10](#) and [CDC Guidance](#) for additional information.

### State Workers on Quarantine

#### **What if an employee is subject to quarantine or self-monitoring by a local public health department?**

An employee who is subject to quarantine or self-monitoring as issued by a local public health department will be provided with telework options if available. If telework is not viable, the employee may qualify for up to 14 days of paid leave under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA).

#### **What if an employee becomes ill during quarantine or self-monitoring by a local public health department?**

An employee who has been subject to quarantine or self-monitoring as issued from a local public health department and tests positive for COVID-19 or otherwise becomes ill, no sooner than 14 days after the quarantine or self-monitoring began, shall be able to use leave credits of all types available. Employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are caring for a family member who has tested positive for COVID-19 may be eligible for 2 weeks of paid leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, EPSLA. Supervisors are encouraged to work with their human resources office regarding the time off for the employee.

#### **If an employee has been in the workplace prior to mandatory or self-quarantine, is there any special disinfecting or cleaning that should be completed?**

There is [CDC Guidance for Cleaning/Disinfection](#) after an individual with COVID-19 has been in the facility. Additionally, CDC has recommendations for routine environmental cleaning located at [CDC Guidance for Response](#).

## State Workers with Household Members on Quarantine

### **If someone an employee lives with was exposed to the COVID-19, can the employee come in to work?**

CDC does not recommend testing, symptom monitoring or special management for people exposed to asymptomatic people with potential exposures to COVID-19 (such as in a household), i.e., “contacts of contacts;” these people are not considered exposed to COVID-19 and may come to work.

### **If someone an employee lives with has traveled to an impacted COVID-19 country and is on self-quarantine, can the employee come to work?**

CDC does not recommend testing, symptom monitoring or special management for people exposed to asymptomatic people with potential exposures to COVID-19 (such as in a household), i.e., “contacts of contacts;” these people are not considered exposed to COVID-19 and may come to work.

### **If someone an employee lives with tests positive for COVID-19 and is quarantined, can the employee come in to work?**

Employees exposed to someone (such as in a household) confirmed to have COVID-19 should consult with their medical provider and/or [local public health department](#) about any possible actions to take based on individual circumstances. Employees should remain at home and contact their supervisors and the human resources offices to discuss all viable options for telework or leave options, as recommended by the local public health office.

Employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are caring for a family member who has tested positive for COVID-19 may be eligible for 2 weeks of EPSLA under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Employees should remain at home and work with their Human Resources office to determine if they meet eligibility.

## State Workers in Healthcare Settings

### **What precautions should be taken for state workers in healthcare settings?**

The Cal/OSHA aerosol transmissible diseases standard that covers healthcare workers should be followed by the healthcare facilities and workers in those facilities. Information on the standard is available within the [Cal OSHA Guidance to Protect Workers](#).

Departments should also follow the rules and policies of the department, and applicable MOUs. CDC guidance refers to standard precautions in healthcare settings to protect healthcare workers from infection and prevent the spread of infection from patient to patient. Standard precautions include:

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- Perform hand hygiene with alcohol-based hand rub before and after all patient contact, contact with potentially infectious material, and before putting on and upon removal of personal protective equipment (PPE). Use soap and water if hands are visibly soiled.
- Follow respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette principles.
- Use PPE whenever there is an expectation of possible exposure to infectious material.

### State Workers at Higher Risk

#### **Which employees are considered at greater risk or “high risk” for COVID-19?**

CDPH advises that the information available about risk groups is based on limited data and could change as we learn more about the disease, but information coming out of countries with COVID-19 shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes adults over 65 years of age and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease.

Departments should not proactively ask employees about their health or age-related risks. Upon an employee’s request, departments will consider all available options for telework and flexible work schedules for individuals considered at greatest risk including those 65 and older and with serious chronic medical conditions.

Departments should consider whether the request is feasible and consider the extent that the department can still fulfill its critical essential services to the public. There will be limitations in positions that are eligible for telework or leave, including at departments with 24/7 institutions, public safety classifications, and other types of classifications that are not conducive to telework.

If the department determines the employee’s work is non-essential and telework is not available due to the job type, employees requesting to stay home should consult with their human resources office on all leave and benefit options available.

Employees who have a doctor’s note that states they must self-isolate because they are high-risk for COVID-10, and telework is not available, may be eligible for 2 weeks of Emergency Paid Sick Leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Employees in this situation should also be informed of their rights under regular FMLA/CFRA and SDI/NDI.

Departments are reminded to review the provisions for leave usage, including catastrophic leave, return to work, and medical verification in the appropriate collective bargaining agreements.

## What precautions should be taken by state workers who are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19?

If an employee is at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of age or health condition, it is important for the employee to take precautions to reduce the risk of getting sick. Actions employees can take to reduce the risk include:

- Engage in safe physical distancing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and stay away from large gatherings and crowds.
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel.
- Clean and disinfect homes to remove germs; practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.
- During a COVID-19 outbreak in their community, stay home as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed.

Additional guidance for employees who are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 can be found on the [CDC website](#). Employees taking precautions, based on higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19, should work with their supervisor/manager on options for telework and flexible work schedules, and/or their human resources office on leave options.

## DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

### How does the State best implement the Stay at Home directives?

Departments should establish a staff management plan that allows for effective physical distancing for those who have essential functions that can only be performed on-site, take into consideration Stay at Home directives from state and local public health departments, and protect the health of employees over the entire length of this crisis. This plan must ensure that mission critical (“critical”) functions and services are maintained, consistent with public health needs arising from this emergency.

Departments should do the following:

1. Determine which critical employees cannot telework and need to continue to report to the office and establish appropriate social distancing protocols to keep them safe in the office.
2. Establish a telework or rotational telework schedule for all other employees who are eligible for telework.
3. For anyone whose job duties are not critical to the continuity of operations, and are not viable for telework, a review should be conducted to determine if the employee can be redirected to other work that is either critical (#1) or eligible for telework (#2).
4. As a last resort, for anyone who is not eligible for telework and cannot be redirected, Administrative Time Off (ATO) may be provided, regardless of available leave balances.

Departments should report all staff on ATO to CalHR for possible redirection to appropriate work in another department. All staff on ATO should be provided with directions on how to stay in contact with management for assignment of duties.

5. In establishing telework schedules, departments should prioritize those employees who are considered at greatest risk and employees who are impacted by school closures.

For employees 65 and older and those with chronic health conditions, departments should consider all available options for telework and flexible work schedules. Those employees not eligible for these options and subject to a local stay-at-home directive should contact their human resources office for leave and benefit options.

This does not include people in essential classifications who are needed to protect our most vulnerable residents, such as hospital and health care workers, pharmacists, peace officers, firefighters, or those specifically named in the Governor’s Executive Orders.

It is State public policy to continue to operate effectively during this emergency. We must keep as many employees as possible engaged to allow departments to deploy state staff to critical functions as absenteeism due to illness increases.

**What are considered essential functions?**

Essential functions include tasks that the public needs government to continue to provide, such as:

- Government Leadership
- Emergency Management
- Social Services/Education
- Information Technology/ Communication
- Public Safety
- Medical/Health
- Critical Infrastructure
- Food Supply
- Environmental Protection
- Public Information

The Governor’s Office of Emergency Services provides an Emergency Support Function Crosswalk for departments to determine essential functions for the specific work performed. In addition, departments have business continuity plans that include essential functions.

Essential functions may be modified due to Governor’s Executive Orders. For example, [Executive Order N-40-20](#) waived various laws and rules for a 60-day period to meet the existing emergency which modified some essential functions provided to the public.

**What if an employee’s job duties are not essential and cannot be performed remotely?**

A review should be conducted to determine if the employee can be provided other duties conducive for telework or redirected to other work that is either 1) critical or 2) conducive for telework.

## What other measures should departments take?

- Departments should ensure business continuity plans are up to date and work with their human resources office to explore flexible work arrangements (e.g. telecommuting). Ensure that you have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support employees who may be able to work from home.
- Departments should ensure all staff are respectful, fair, and without bias in interactions with all persons. Do not assume someone of a national origin, race, or background is more likely to have COVID-19. Public health emergencies, such as the outbreak of COVID-19, are stressful times for people and communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can lead to social [stigma](#) toward people, places, or things. For example, stigma and discrimination can occur when people associate a disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality, even though not everyone in that population or from that region is specifically at risk for the disease. Stigma can also occur after a person has been released from COVID-19 quarantine even though they are not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others.

Stigma hurts everyone by creating fear or anger towards other people. Stigmatized groups may be subjected to:

- Social avoidance or rejection
- Denials of healthcare, education, housing or employment
- Physical violence

Stigma affects the emotional or mental health of stigmatized groups and the communities they live in. Stopping stigma is important to making communities and community members resilient. Everyone can help stop stigma related to COVID-19 by [knowing the facts](#) and sharing them with others in your community.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

### Are union notifications still required during emergency situations?

Yes. In responding to emergency situations, departments should work with their labor relations office to ensure that appropriate, timely notice is provided to employee representatives when implementing any changes that concern the working conditions of employees.

### What if an employee's child's school is closed because of COVID-19?

Sudden school closures disrupt work schedules and increase absenteeism. Departments should consider all viable options for telework and flexible work schedules. Employees who are not able to telework or work at their physical worksite due to school or childcare closures may be eligible for leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Employees should work with their human resources office for all leave and benefit options. Do not bring children into the workplace.

**Can an employee elect to use dock instead of leave credits for a COVID-19 related absence?**

Departments should have an established policy on whether employees with leave can use dock when they have leave credits available. Per California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 599.785, departments have discretion to approve or deny requests for dock. The policy should be applied consistently across the entire department.

**Do we need to report time differently on the timesheet?**

Timesheets are still required and will be coordinated by each department. Contact your human resources office for guidance.

GovOps has requested additional tracking of absenteeism in addition to timesheets which is also coordinated through department human resources offices. Additionally, GovOps is tracking department office closures through department points of contact.

**TRAVEL ISSUES****State Workers Traveling for Work or Involved with Work-Related Gatherings****What types of work-related gatherings need to be cancelled?**

All non-essential gatherings, meetings, trainings, and conferences should be cancelled if they cannot be conducted through other means that allow for safe physical distancing. Additional guidance is available at [CDPH Guidance on Gatherings](#).

**What about required Public Participation Meetings?**

State entities must continue to adhere to the Bagley-Keene Act's requirements for publicizing meeting times and posting meeting agendas. CalHR has issued guidance based on [Executive Order N-25-20](#) which was superseded by [Executive Order N-29-20](#).

**Are there any travel restrictions related to COVID-19?**

The CDC recommends travelers avoid all nonessential travel. Please review the CDC's travel notice [website](#) for the list of designated countries and additional details.

Departments should continue to review all previously approved travel blankets and individual out-of-state travel requests and defer all mission critical and discretionary travel to the CDC-designated countries until further notice.

Given the extensive disruption and limitations on travel, all visiting delegations to departments and agencies that have travelled from or within the CDC-designated countries should be postponed or conducted by video-conferencing or conference calls. Additionally, please continue to notify CalOES of any scheduled visiting delegations at: [TravelSecurity@CalOES.ca.gov](mailto:TravelSecurity@CalOES.ca.gov)

Departments should limit travel within the State of California to essential functions.

**What do I do if employees are refusing to travel for work?**

If the travel is not essential to work functions, the supervisor/manager has the discretion to determine whether travel is required.

If the travel is essential to the employee's job functions, the employee would be required to travel. Any refusal to travel by employees should be addressed with your human resources office. However, this guidance may change based on updated guidelines issued by the CDC and CDPH.

Employees should postpone or cancel travel to any non-essential meetings, conferences, or trainings, consistent with the statewide stay at home order for California.

State Workers Choosing to Travel to High-Risk Countries**If an employee chose to travel via a cruise ship or to a [high-risk country](#), comes in contact with COVID-19 and is subsequently placed in quarantine or self-quarantine, is the employee eligible for Administrative Time-Off (ATO)?**

An employee who chooses to travel after knowing the risks and becomes subject to quarantine will not be provided ATO and the employee should contact their department's human resources office regarding leave and/or benefit options.

This communication is intended to provide general guidance and information to departments during this time of emergency. Every effort has been made to provide current information. However, because of the evolving nature of the emergency, we encourage you to check the public health links provided in this communication for the most current information.

If you have questions not addressed in this communication, please contact your department human resources office.