

The State of California continues to act to protect public health and safety as we respond to novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The state is mobilizing every level of government to prepare for and respond to the spread of the virus. Departments are reviewing and applying all guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local public health departments to ensure the safety of our employees as the situation evolves.

What Employees Should Do

- Employees should stay informed. The state has created a comprehensive website for COVID-19 information [here](#). Also, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website [here](#) and the California Department of Public Health website [here](#). These websites are regularly updated with the latest information and advice for the public.
- In order to reduce the spread of viruses (including COVID-19), important and necessary steps can be taken by all employees to protect themselves and those around them:
 - Always practice safe physical distancing of 6 feet or more from others not of the same household.
 - 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 and other people if employee becomes sick with symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Wear a face covering at work and when in public, in accordance with the June 18, 2020, [CDPH Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#). Certain individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings as stated in this Guidance.
 - Self-screen daily by taking temperature and recognizing symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea). Employees with any 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.
 - Follow guidance from public health officials.
- If employees are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of age or health condition, it is important for employees to take precautions to reduce the risk of getting sick. Actions employees can take, in addition to the above steps, to reduce the risk include:
 - 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.

- Employees who develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 in the workplace or at home (e.g., fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea) are considered symptomatic. Employees who develop symptoms at home should stay home and contact their supervisor/manager to discuss alternate work arrangements and leave options. Employees who develop symptoms at work will be sent home or to a medical provider and provided with alternate work arrangements and leave options. While ill, employees should remain at home and contact their supervisor/manager to discuss all viable options for telework or leave availability.
- Employees who test positive for COVID-19 (even if they have no symptoms) should follow guidance from their local health department or healthcare provider on isolation, and instructions from their employer's occupational health program or human resources department on when to return to work. Criteria for return to work may vary by work setting and circumstances and is determined by the employer's occupational health program or human resources department, based on guidance from CDC and CDPH or instructions from the local health department in the jurisdiction where the workplace is located.
- Employees who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and are not tested, or who are tested and found to be negative, will not be permitted to return to the workplace until they meet the same criteria for return to work as individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, unless they are evaluated by a medical provider who believes their symptoms are due to another more likely diagnosis.
- If someone the employee lives with tests positive for COVID-19, the employee should remain at home and contact their supervisor/manager to discuss all viable options for telework or leave availability. The employee should consult with their personal physician or [local public health department](#) either by phone or their website about any possible actions to take based on individual circumstances. Household members of a confirmed case will usually be quarantined for 14 days following last exposure to the household member who was diagnosed with COVID-19.
- If an employee has tested positive for COVID-19 or is caring for a family member who has tested positive for COVID-19, they may be eligible for up to 2 weeks of paid leave under the Families First Coronavirus Act (FFCRA), Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA). Employees should remain at home and work with their department human resources office to determine if they meet eligibility.
- Employees who conduct field work, whether related to COVID-19 or their normal programmatic work, must follow safety protocols for pre-deployment, during, and post-deployment as required by their department. Employees may be assessed for risks encountered during field work and asked to take additional preventive measures by their

employer's health and safety or occupational health program or human resources department.

What Employees Should Know

- If an employee is subject to quarantine or self-monitoring from a local public health department, workplace occupational health program or human resources department, or personal physician, they will be provided with telework options. If telework is not viable, the employee may also qualify for up to 14 days of paid leave under the EPSLA.
- An employee who has been subject to quarantine or self-monitoring as issued from a local public health department, workplace occupational health program or human resources department, or personal physician and tests positive for COVID-19 or otherwise becomes ill, no sooner than 14 days after the quarantine or self-monitoring began, the employee shall be able to use leave credits of all types available, if additional time off is needed.
- If there are cases of COVID-19 in the workplace, employees will be instructed about the need to quarantine at home based on their exposure and if laboratory testing for COVID-19 may be recommended. Departments will use instructions and guidance from the local health department, CDC, and CDPH to determine needed actions by employees.
- The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) Aerosol Transmissible Diseases Standard, which covers healthcare, public health, correctional, certain congregate living, laboratory, and certain other work environments at high risk for these infectious diseases, should be followed by employers and workers in those facilities. Information on the standard is available from [Cal/OSHA Guidance to Protect Workers](#).
- School closures have disrupted work schedules. Departments will consider all viable options for telework and flexible work schedules. Employees shall be able to use leave credits of all types available, including sick leave, to care for children as a result of school closure that officials determine are necessary to protect public health. Employees may be eligible for paid leave under the recently enacted FFCRA, Emergency Family and Medical Leave Act (EFMLA). Employees should contact their department's human resources office regarding all leave options. Do not bring children into the workplace.
- 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 they are taking to ensure that public areas are cleaned regularly, and that hand sanitizer dispensers are available in their buildings.

Avoiding Bias and Stigma

In response to this new virus, employees should remember to be respectful, fair, and without bias in interactions with all persons. Do not assume someone of a particular 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 the community.

Scope of this Communication to Employees

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

If employees have questions not addressed in this communication, they are encouraged to contact their supervisor/manager, human resources office, and/or employee representative as appropriate.