

COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions

Purpose of Document:

This document is intended to provide clarity about employee policies, practices and procedures that may be impacted in response to COVID-19 and its potential impact to operations. If you have any questions that are not answered in this document, please direct them to your Department Administrative Officer. This document will continue to evolve as we receive additional questions and as information progresses. Information is subject to change and the below guidelines are intended to be temporary as a safety precaution to COVID-19.

1. What is the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

2. What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 infection?

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

3. What should I do if I think I have been exposed to or infected with COVID-19?

Alert your healthcare provider immediately if you think you may be infected with COVID-19, including if you have been exposed to someone with the virus and have signs/symptoms of infection. If you are experiencing symptoms, you should tell your healthcare provider about any recent travel to areas where COVID-19 is spreading.

If you believe you have been exposed on the job, alert your supervisor or the occupational health clinic immediately at 562-570-4053.

4. How is COVID-19 diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider can determine if your signs and symptoms are explained by other causes, or if there is reason to suspect you may have COVID-19. If laboratory testing is appropriate, your healthcare provider will work with health officials in your state, who in-turn will work with the CDC, to collect and test any clinical specimens for diagnosis.

The CDC's [Information for Laboratories](#) webpage provides detailed information and interim guidelines for collecting, handling, and testing clinical specimens from patients under investigation and also provides laboratory biosafety guidelines for handling and processing specimens associated with COVID-19 infection.

5. How is COVID-19 treated?

No vaccine or specific treatment for COVID-19 infection is available. Hospitals can provide supportive care for infected people.

The CDC [COVID-19 Information for Healthcare Professionals](#) webpage provides interim guidance for healthcare professionals, infection control, and home care for managing patients with known or suspected COVID-19.

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6. How can I protect myself?

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

7. What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, do not go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

8. Based on evolving COVID-19 potential public health impacts, will there be any changes to city sick leave processes?

At this time, employees should follow current sick leave procedures. Time should be coded based on the type of leave taken (sick, vacation, personal holiday, etc.) in accordance with MOU's and any other city policy or rules. Please be advised that further guidance will be given on usage various leave accruals for COVID-19 and respiratory related illnesses.

9. What leave can I use if I recently traveled to a CDC identified COVID-19 country and exhibiting symptomatic fever, cough and difficulty breathing?

Employees should use current sick leave accruals. If an employee has run out of sick leave or has no current sick leave accrued, they may use accrued vacation leave, personal holidays or other banked leave accruals.

10. What happens if I run out of sick leave or currently no accrued leave balances?

We recognize some employees may run out of sick leave. Once out of sick leave, employees may use vacation leave, personal holidays or other banked leave accruals. Additionally, employees may also submit a request for catastrophic leave if eligible under City policy. We also recognize that there may be employees affected by COVID-19 who currently have no leave accruals. The Human Resources Department is currently exploring options to allow employees affected by confirmed cases of COVID-19 or have respiratory illnesses and who have exhausted all forms of paid leave to stay home without loss of pay. This FAQ will be updated as additional information becomes available.

11. What if an immediate family member is ill due to COVID-19, can I use sick leave?

Yes, caring for ill family member is considered an accepted use of paid sick leave. Employees must notify the Department of absence and follow current call-in procedures.

12. Can the Department require someone to go home if they demonstrate flu-like symptoms?

Supervisors should encourage employees who exhibit flu-like symptoms to stay home or return home. If an employee is unwilling to voluntarily stay or return home, consult with the Department Administrative Officer before requiring an employee to stay or return home.

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13. Should an employee be required to present a doctor's note if they report feeling sick or have similar symptoms consistent with COVID-19?

Per the City Personnel Ordinance, any absence that exceeds five (5) working days requires employees to submit a proof of illness or incapacity to the department. Like any other communicable disease, for a confirmed case of COVID-19, the employee will be provided a notification excluding them from work and advising when the employee may return to work. Further guidance regarding medical notes is being developed.

14. What if an employee is requesting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

DHHS continues to discourage the use of masks and gloves for those employees that are not part of the City Aerosol Transmissible Disease Program. We will continue to share the current CDC best practices for preventative actions such as washing hands and avoiding touching eyes, mouth or nose. Employees in the City Aerosol Transmissible Disease Program and Respiratory Protection Program will continue getting access to their PPE (e.g., respirators, gloves, etc.). This approach is necessary to support responsible planning for COVID-19 and to protect front-line employees.

15. What if schools are ordered to close due to the state of emergency?

Employees will be allowed to use accrued leaves in accordance with MOU's and City policies.

16. Is telecommuting an option?

Yes, telecommuting is an option for classifications with the ability to work remotely, determined by the Department Head. Please be advised that further guidance will be given on telecommuting for COVID-19 and respiratory-related illnesses. We are currently evaluating how to allow employees to telecommute as an option while ensuring business continuity of important City services. Supervisors should consult with their Department Administrative Officer for more information.

17. What if an employee is having trouble coping with this current event?

Direct the employee to contact EAP at (888) 426-0025 or visit the MHN website at mhn.advantageengagement.com and enter the company code: LBBWell or seek medical support.

18. What if a non-career employee asks about unemployment benefits? *(Added to the FAQ on 3.25.20)*

Employees can apply on the state unemployment website and the state will determine whether they meet the threshold to qualify for unemployment insurance. There is no additional information that you need to provide them. Unemployment applications are submitted online by the employee and there is no action required from the department.

19. How much information may an employer request from an employee who calls in sick, to protect the rest of its workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic? *(Added to the FAQ on 3.25.20)*

During a pandemic, ADA-covered employers may ask such employees if they are experiencing symptoms of the pandemic virus. For COVID-19, these include symptoms such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat. Employers must maintain all information about employee illness as a confidential medical record in compliance with the ADA.

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20. When may an ADA-covered employer take the body temperature of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic? *(Added to the FAQ on 3.25.20)*

Generally, measuring an employee's body temperature is a medical examination. Because the CDC and state/local health authorities have acknowledged community spread of COVID-19 and issued attendant precautions, employers may measure employees' body temperature. However, employers should be aware that some people with COVID-19 do not have a fever. Temperature taking should be applied on a nondiscriminatory basis. Before implementing temperature taking, Departments must contact HR.

21. Per the DHHS guidance on COVID-19 for vulnerable populations, are all City employees essential and exempt from the public health guidance? *(Added to the FAQ on 3.25.20)*

Each department has identified its essential or critical services. Even though the DHHS guidance does not apply to people who work in essential services if you fall into the essential category and would like to request accommodation contact your department Administrative Services Officer

22. An employee who does not fall under the essential category, self discloses as part of the vulnerable population and is requesting permission to work remotely? *(Added to the FAQ on 3.25.20)*

If the employee self-identified and asked for accommodation, work with your Administrative Officer to explore telecommuting as an option.