City of Long Beach
Department of Human Resources

PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Subject: Communicable Disease Prevention Program
Effective: March 1, 2010
Policy Number: 6.7

I. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the City of Long Beach (CLB) to provide a safe and healthy work environment by establishing procedures and guidelines to help prevent and/or limit the transmission of communicable diseases in the workplace. During a pandemic and/or other communicable disease emergency, CLB departments may implement plans to adjust their operations if a reduced workforce is experienced to ensure resources are available to provide critical processes.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all CLB employees, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary.

All supervisors and managers shall apply this policy consistently. Communicable diseases are not usually presumed to be industrial; however, there are some exceptions under California state law. This policy may represent an exception to current City workplace injury and illness practices. This regulation is applicable to all City departments and offices responsible directly to the City Manager. It is also requested that elective offices and other independent offices and departments of the City comply with this policy and procedure in the interest of administrative uniformity.

It is illegal to discriminate against an employee based on his/her medical condition and/or disability. Supervisors/Managers shall not obtain medical information about an employee's general health to determine if that employee is at risk of contracting communicable diseases.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Preventive Measures

During a pandemic and/or other communicable disease emergency, as declared in accordance with established guidelines set by the World Heath Organization (WHO), U.S. Federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), or State and local public health officials (CLB Department of Health and Human Services) the following preventive measures identified below may be initiated:

1. Providing appropriate information and training to employees

2. Arranging for onsite voluntary vaccinations by healthcare providers

3. Implementing social distancing practices including:

a. Reducing face-to-face exposure by using conference calls

b. Minimizing or eliminating travel to affected areas (this is not applicable to Public Safety first responders)

c. Canceling meetings, workshops, training sessions and scheduled events (this is not applicable to Public Safety first responders)

d. Allowing employees to work from home to reduce exposure in the workplace

4. Ensuring frequently touched items (e.g. door knobs, hand rails, etc.) are cleaned and disinfected regularly

5. Reinforcing frequent hand washing and providing hand sanitizers to employees

6. Providing employees with tissues and disinfectant wipes to allow employees to disinfect copiers, keyboards, telephone receivers, etc. in their work areas

7. Encouraging employees to stay home and/or sending employees home who have symptoms consistent with the symptoms identified by the CDC, State and local health authorities for the pandemic or communicable disease of concern

8. Requiring employees who travel to an affected area to remain at home until the incubation period of the pandemic and/or communicable disease of concern has passed, if indicated (this is not applicable to Public Safety first responders who respond to incidents within our service area)

9. Establishing flexible work hours to minimize contact between employees, such as scheduling employees to work in shifts

10. Limiting access to CLB buildings to CLB employees

11. Sending employees home who do not support critical business processes

B. Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

Each department is required to prepare a COOP that may be implemented to adjust their operations if a reduced workforce is experienced to ensure resources are available to provide critical processes. The City Health Officer or designee may recommend activation of a department's COOP.

C. Employees Who Appear Ill While at Work

When an employee is present in the workplace and exhibits signs of a contagious illness, they may be directed to go home. An employee should not be sent to the Occupational Health Office during a pandemic declared by the WHO or the CDC.

An employee's supervisor and Department Administrative Officer, or designee (Manager/Officer) must observe one or more of the following symptoms of a contagious disease.

1. Persistent coughing or sneezing
2. Flushed skin
3. Sweating without exertion
4. Shaking chills
5. Persistent eye and/or nasal discharge
6. Extreme fatigue or lethargy
7. Blistering or oozing skin lesions, and/or
8. Other symptoms as determined by the Occupational Health Manager, City Health Officer, or other public health officials such as the CDC.

D. Department's Response

Due to the potential for overwhelming the resources of City's Occupational Health Clinic during a declaration of a pandemic by the WHO and/or the CDC, and because of the widespread presence of disease-causing organisms, employees exhibiting signs of a contagious disease may be directed as follows:

1. The employee will be referred to their personal physician or local urgent care facility for evaluation and diagnostic testing, if indicated. If the employee's physician diagnoses a contagious illness consistent with transmission in the workplace, the employee shall be sent to Occupational Health for completion of the appropriate paperwork.

2. Due to the high prevalence of disease during a pandemic, there is a high probability that one would become ill because of an exposure occurring outside the workplace. Therefore, it will be incumbent upon the employee to obtain proof of exposure to the pandemic disease in the workplace in order to substantiate a workers' compensation claim.

E. Employees Returning to Work

An employee who has been absent from work due to a contagious illness shall be allowed to return to work when she/he has had no fever for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medication and is no longer displaying other symptoms of contagious illness, or in accordance with the existing policies and provisions in the Personnel Ordinance and applicable MOU.

F. Communication

In order to effectively inform employees about a pandemic and/or other significant communicable disease outbreak, the City's Public Information Officer will be responsible, in conjunction with the City Health Officer, for developing a Crisis Communication plan for pandemics and/or other communicable diseases.

G. Appropriate Leave

Employees may be permitted to use their accrued sick leave, or other appropriate leave, if they have symptoms consistent with the pandemic and/or communicable disease of concern and/or elect to stay home to help prevent spreading the disease to others in the workplace, or tend to ill family members. Time used will be consistent with existing policies and procedures, provisions of the Personnel Ordinance, employment MOUs, and state and/or federal laws.

Other examples of leave that may be enforced as a result of this policy include:

1. Quarantined by a Public Health Official: If an employee is quarantined, the employee shall be granted appropriate leave until the quarantine period ends or the employee becomes ill with the communicable disease, whichever comes first.

2. CLB administration offices close or only critical business processes are allowed to continue: If employees are asked to stay home due to the closure of CLB Buildings or offices or they are not assigned to a critical business process, employees may use accrued compensatory leave, vacation leave, or unpaid authorized leave if the employee does not have sufficient accrued paid leave available.

   ADVISORY NOTE: Should an employee not have sufficient leave available, the City of Long Beach may allow such employees to request catastrophic leave.

H. Review of the Policy Provisions

The City Health Officer or designee, in conjunction with the City Manager, will review, amend, extend, or cancel the provisions of this policy as appropriate.

IV. DEFINITIONS

A. Affected Area: A geographical area that has been determined by authorities (World Health Organization (WHO), U.S. Federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), or State and local public health officials) to have wide spread transmission of a communicable disease, including significant localized seasonal influenza (or other diseases) up to and including pandemics.

B. Airborne Contagious Illnesses: Illnesses that are spread to other individuals through droplets or small airborne particles, which are suspended in the air, including but not limited to colds, influenza, tuberculosis.

C. Communicable Disease: A disease that can be transferred from an infected person to another individual.

D. Contagious Skin Conditions: Areas of exposed skin that have moist discharge and are not covered by a protective dressing.

E. Incubation Period: The time, usually in days, between exposure to an illness and the onset of symptoms.

F. Infection Control: A set of policies, procedures and practices used to minimize the risk of spreading infection such as hand washing and cleaning commonly touched surfaces.

G. Isolation: implemented when the City Health Officer believes that an individual may have a contagious disease and represents an immediate danger to the public.

H. Pandemic: A global disease outbreak that spreads easily from person-to-person.

I. Physician: A licensed healthcare professional (Physician, Physician's Assistant, or Nurse Practitioner) who has knowledge of diagnosis and treatment of contagious diseases and has examined the individual.

J. Quarantine: implemented when the City Health Officer believes that an individual may have been exposed to a contagious disease and represents a potential danger to the public.

K. Social Distancing: Actions taken to prevent or reduce the opportunities for close contact between people in order to limit the spread of a disease, including limiting or canceling public gathering, meetings, or travel.

V. REFERENCES

A. U.S. Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

B. California Department of Public Health

C. California Department of Health Care Services

D. Los Angeles County Department of Public Health