

To: Connecticut State Agencies
From: The Office of Policy & Management and the Department of Administrative Services
Re: REVISED COVID 19-related personnel situations in state agencies
Date: March 11, 2020

In the past when the State faced pandemic situations such as SARS, the Avian (bird) flu, swine flu etc., the State planned for coverage and continuity of operations in the event of a catastrophic outbreak leading to staffing shortages. Consideration was given to potential impacts to critical functions and how they could continue to be performed by telecommuting when possible, or temporary personnel if necessary. The State is in the process of revisiting those plans, and additional direction will be provided as circumstances evolve. For more immediate circumstances we offer the following guidance.

Employees Are Ill or Who May Be Exposed to COVID-19

Employees who are ill with COVID 19 or manifesting symptoms of the virus (including fever, coughing and shortness of breath) should follow the instructions of their health care professional. The illness may or may not arise to the level of an FMLA covered event. The Agency Human Resources Office shall provide relevant FMLA paperwork as appropriate. Employees who are ill should utilize accrued sick leave. Once the sick leave is exhausted, said employees may use other accrued leave including vacation, personal leave or accrued compensatory time. There may be additional paid leave benefits such as advance sick leave, leave donation and sick leave bank as prescribed by the specific collective bargaining agreement or policy.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that employees who report to work demonstrating symptoms of COVID-19 or develop such symptoms while at work should be directed to return home. Because individuals may demonstrate such symptoms for reasons other than COVID-19 (or other infectious diseases), agency Human Resources professionals should speak with the affected individual in a confidential setting. If the symptoms appear to be COVID-19 related but the employee does not voluntarily agree to go home, the agency Human Resources professional should consult with DAS and OLR, before requiring the employee to return home.

Employees caring for a family member or someone domiciled in the same residence who is ill with COVID 19 or manifesting symptoms of the virus may utilize sick family leave, vacation, personal leave, or compensatory time upon request for the

portion of the day devoted to caregiving. Such employees should stay at home and self-monitor consistent with the CDC guidelines for 14 days from the original date of exposure. Said employees may request to telework for the portion of the day not devoted to caregiving. The illness may or may not arise to the level of an FMLA covered event. The Agency Human Resources Office shall provide relevant FMLA paperwork as appropriate. The Agency Human Resources Officer may request appropriate documentation to support such request.

To the extent that the employee who is providing care to a family member is directed by a medical professional to self-monitor, the employee will be eligible for paid leave pursuant to 5-248(a) for 14 days from the date of exposure.

Employees who have travelled to one of the Level 2 or Level 3 countries as defined by the CDC, and return asymptomatic*, should stay at home and self-monitor consistent with the CDC guidelines for 14 days from the date of return. If they are approved to telework by their agency head, then they should be allowed to do so during the self-monitoring period. The telework guidelines shall be suspended, as needed, thus allowing them to telework for the entire period and not for only two days per week. Those employees for whom telework is not approved by their agency head shall stay at home and self-monitor consistent with the CDC guidelines, and they shall be placed on paid leave pursuant to 5-248(a) for 14 days from the date of exposure. In either situation, the employee must provide documentation of travel to a Level 2 or Level 3 country, including a travel itinerary and a photocopy of the passport substantiating proof of said travel and date of return.

Employees with a family member domiciled with the employee who travelled to one of the Level 2 or Level 3 countries as defined by the CDC, should stay at home and self-monitor consistent with the CDC guidelines for 14 days from the date of exposure. If they are approved by their agency head to telework, then they should be allowed to do so during the self-monitoring period. The telework guidelines shall be suspended, as needed, thus allowing them to telework for the entire period and not for only two days per week. These employees who are not approved to telework shall stay at home and self-monitor- consistent with the CDC guidelines, and shall be placed on paid leave pursuant to 5-248(a) for 14 days from the date of exposure. The employee must provide documentation that the family member domiciled with the employee travelled to a Level 2 or Level 3 country, including a travel itinerary and a photocopy of the passport substantiating proof of said travel and date of return.

Employees who are asymptomatic but have been directed by a medical provider or public official to stay home and self-monitor due to possible community

exposure, should follow such directives. If they are approved to telework by their agency head, then they should be allowed to do so during the self-monitoring period. The telework guidelines shall be suspended, as needed, thus allowing them to telework for the entire period and not for only two days per week. Those employees for whom telework is not approved by their agency head shall be placed on paid leave pursuant to 5-248(a) for 14 days from the date of exposure.

Inter-state Travel Freeze

In accordance with Governor Lamont's March 9, 2020 email to all state employees, there is an immediate freeze on state employee travel on state business outside of Connecticut until further notice. Any requested exceptions must be approved by the head of the affected agency in consultation with COO Josh Geballe.

This travel freeze includes state-funded travel by state employees as well as travel by state employees involving *state-funded time away from work* (including training, conference or education leave).

When cancelling previously made travel arrangements, the following protocols developed by DAS and the Office of the State Comptroller should be followed:

- For airfare booked/reserved through Sanditz Travel, the agency (i.e. the employee who planned to travel or the individual who made the arrangements) should contact Sanditz Travel as soon as possible and Sanditz will provide a credit on account for up to one year for the specific state employee. For that state employee, the one-year date of the credit starts with the date the flight was originally ticketed, and the re-scheduled flight must be booked with the same airline. After one year from the original booking of the flight, the state employee's unused credits on account will be lost. Please note all airlines charge a change fee, with some fees as much as \$200 domestically and \$400 internationally.
- With respect to conference registration fees, the agency should contact the conference organizer as soon as possible regarding the respective cancellation policy for the conference and request a refund the registration fee.
- For hotel/lodging reservations, the agency shall call the hotel or lodging facility as soon as possible to provide notice of travel cancellation. Typically, the lodging facility holds the room on a credit card and charges are not incurred until the actual check-in and completion of stay. If there is no notice of cancellation, agencies put themselves at risk for having to pay.
- In all instances, agencies shall seek email confirmation from all applicable vendors to provide documentation of their efforts to cancel the travel plans and to provide confirmation that credits have been issued for the travel.

Additionally, any state employees working with out-of-state contractors who travel to Connecticut-based sites, planning to welcome out-of-state colleagues for meetings or other out-of-state visitors should evaluate whether these activities can proceed remotely through teleconference or online collaboration and, if so, should take that approach.

Other Social Distancing Measures

Consistent with agency needs and within the agency's existing resources, including the any necessary IT equipment, commissioners and agency heads have some discretion to determine whether and when to implement the following social distancing measures:

- Authorize additional employees to telecommute (provided that the employees are in job classes that have been authorized by DAS and OPM for telework);
- Allow employees to telecommute for 50% or more of their scheduled workweek;
- Authorize modifications to employees' work schedules in order to reduce the total number of employees in the workplace at any given time;
- Evaluate with agency-hosted meetings, conferences and training sessions are necessary to hold and/or could be held via teleconference instead of in-person.

Employees who have a medical condition that may put them at higher-than-average risk for infection who believe that they need **other or additional** workplace modifications should follow their agency's standard process for requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Pregnancy Discrimination Act and the Connecticut Fair Employment Practices Act. Agencies should assess such requests in accordance with their standard policies.

Because each of these options may implicate collective bargaining agreement terms concerning hours of work in the event of an emergency, they should be implemented only in consultation between agency Human Resources professionals and DAS and OLR staff. With regard to employees who are represented by collective bargaining units, execution of these options should only occur after OLR has provided final sign off as such actions may warrant OLR executing an agreement with the respective union(s) or ensuring appropriate communication has occurred.

These guidelines are our effort to follow the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) mandates requiring employers to maintain a safe and healthy work environment free of "recognized hazards" to employees' health or safety that could result in injury or death. Having done everything to ensure the health and safety of employees in the workplace, there is no cause to accommodate employees who are otherwise unwilling to work with others based upon their own personal comfort levels.

Since the CDC has encouraged individuals to contact a health care provider remotely rather than physically going to a medical facility, requirements for a medical certificate documenting the illness may be waived.

For any situations not covered by these guidelines, you are encouraged to contact DAS or OLR for specific guidance.

*<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. If an employee cannot provide a medical certification, what alternative documentation should the employee provide?

If an employee cannot provide medical certification, the employee shall provide a written explanation to their agency Human Resources professional describing their symptoms, the directions they have received from medical providers or public officials, and any supporting documentation they may possess.

2. Are managers and other non-represented employees eligible for telecommuting either because they are self-monitoring at home or as a social distancing measure?

Yes, consistent with the agency's operational needs and existing resources, an agency head may approve managers, confidential employees and appointed officials to telecommute, provided such employees are not in hazardous duty positions. A formal policy / item will be completed to support this temporary policy.

3. How should employees who are approved to take paid leave pursuant to 5-248(a) because they are self-monitoring at home and cannot telecommute code their time?

Employees who are approved to take paid leave pursuant to 5-248(a) should code the timesheet with Time Reporting Code (TRC) of LOPD in combination with the Override Reason Code (ORC) of PDC19. However, if an employee becomes sick as a result of contracting COVID-19, the employee should code the timesheet with the appropriate SICK leave TRCs.

4. What measures are being taken to ensure that state office buildings are clean?

Property management firms and cleaning contractors have been directed to increase the use of disinfectants when cleaning state office buildings and to increase the frequency of disinfectant cleaning, especially focusing on common touch points.

5. What measures are being taken to clean state fleet vehicles

Consistent with General Letter 115, it is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that the interiors of state-owned vehicles are kept clean.

6. Is the State considering additional technology options to enable agencies to expand telecommuting?

DAS and its partner agencies are developing ways to enable greater numbers of state employees to be productive outside the state office environment. Most of these options will mean extending cloud collaboration and security capabilities. We are enabling agency collaboration by using Microsoft Teams. This software allows people to share documents, ideas, video and audio conference in secure ways with other state employees and outside entities. DAS has started daily meetings with agency IT leadership to investigate all remote work options. Besides Teams and our emergency operations center collaboration solution, WebEOC, we are extending our Virtual Private Network and Virtual Desktop solutions to provide access in a secure manner to those employees whose job function will allow remote working. We are adding both capacity and new capability daily. Agencies should work within their CEPF resources or existing inventory for computer needs.