



INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

To: ALL EMPLOYEES

Date: March 17, 2020

From: EDGAR CISNEROS, CITY MANAGER

Subject: CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) FAQs FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

The health and wellbeing of our employees is of paramount importance to City leaders. Every employee deserves a safe and supportive workplace. Due to the seriousness surrounding the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the City Council has authorized the closure of City facilities to the public until further notice.

These guidelines apply to full time and part time employees. For all other employment classifications, please contact HR for guidance. This is an emergency situation and none of these guidelines should be construed as a permanent change to policy.

While many of the services you provide are considered essential and very much needed at this time, your health and wellbeing comes first so managers have been instructed to be as flexible as possible with employees seeking to take vacation time during the next two weeks. As always, any employee that is not feeling well should take sick time as they normally would during any other applicable health event.

Due to the rapidly evolving nature of the virus, the Administration and Human Resources Departments will maintain this document with updated information about the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

BACKGROUND

A new virus first identified in Wuhan, China in late 2019 has spread across the globe and is now in the United States. The new coronavirus, COVID-19, is not a flu but a pneumonia-like infection. [The virus symptoms manifest as a mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.](#) The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) believes at this time that symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. The CDC recommends staying at least 3 meters (6 feet) away from a person who is sick or possibly infected with the virus. It may also be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. Therefore, it is important for everyone to wash their hands thoroughly and avoid touching their face.

WORKPLACE ISSUES

What should I do if an employee has recently traveled to an affected area or otherwise may have been exposed to the COVID-19 coronavirus?

If an employee has recently (approx. last 3 months) traveled to an area that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has deemed as high risk or has otherwise been exposed to COVID-19, the employee must notify their supervisor and department head immediately prior to returning to work. The department head must then immediately notify the Human Resources Department. As of the date of this memo, the areas currently identified by the CDC as high risk (Levels 2 and 3) include China, South Korea, Iran, Italy, France, Sweden (all at Level 3), United Kingdom, most of Europe (at Level 3 - see CDC links below for specific countries) and Japan (Level 2). In addition, cruise ship travel has been identified as high risk by the CDC. Please note that information on travel health and notices related to travel destinations are rapidly evolving each day and can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html> and <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>.

After travel to high risk areas or other potential exposure, employees should remain out of the workplace for at least a 14-day quarantine period of time to prevent the spread of the virus. If employees have returned to work after traveling to a high risk area or after being exposed, the employees will be directed to go home (Contact HR first or immediately after they have been sent home from their respective manager) and options of telecommuting (if available) or other actions will be reviewed by Administration and the Human Resources Department. After sending the employee home, HR will contact the employee for more information and if appropriate, will work with LA County Public Health for additional follow up.

If a City employee is observed exhibiting signs of an upper respiratory infection while at work, can the supervisor/manager ask an employee to stay home or leave work, regardless of recent travel history and/or destination?

Yes. If an employee appears to have acute respiratory illness symptoms upon arrival to work or become sick during the day, they should be sent home. The employee can exercise the telecommuting option (if available and able to work) or other options will be reviewed by Administration and the Human Resources Department on a case by case basis. Supervisors may make limited inquiries regarding the employee's recent travel and/or potential exposure to COVID-19 for the purpose of determining work status. Before sending employees home, please contact your HR Department for guidance; if the event is outside of normal business hours, the employee should be sent home and HR contacted as soon as possible. After an employee is sent home, HR will contact our "Company Nurse" for assistance. If necessary, "Company Nurse" or the Human Resources Department will contact LA County Public Health.

If a City employee is exhibiting signs of an upper respiratory infection refuses to go home, can the supervisor/manager give a direct work order to go home? How should the employee be paid?

Yes. If the employee is sent home, they should be allowed to telecommute/work remotely from home (if telecommuting has been approved for the employee, if employee is able to work and if

the work can be performed from home) or other options of leave will be assessed by the Human Resources and Administration Department.

Can an employee be offered telecommuting options as an infection-control strategy?

Telecommuting options may be offered under certain circumstances and on a case by case basis. Review of these telecommuting options will be reviewed with the Department Head and Administration (see Table A below).

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 or is placed in medical isolation for presumptive COVID-19, how will we address those employees who worked closely with them?

Managers/Supervisors should send home all employees who have worked in close proximity with the infected or isolated employee for a 14-day quarantine period of time to ensure the infection does not spread. The employees sent home can telecommute, if telecommuting has been approved for the employee, and if employee is able to work. The employee may also use any available leave balances, or be placed on another form of leave (see table below). Before sending employees home, please contact your HR department (if possible) who will work with Company Nurse.

Can an employee refuse to come to work due to fear of infection?

No. However, if the employee is at increased risk under CDC guidelines and has an underlying medical condition that could make them more vulnerable to the virus (Vulnerable Population), they may be able to telecommute (if available) with prior approval by the supervisor, department head and administration and use any available paid time off (ie. Flex Leave, Vacation, Personal Time). While many of the services you provide to the City are considered essential and very much needed at this time, your health and wellbeing comes first, so managers have been instructed to be as flexible as possible with employees seeking to take time off during the next two weeks should they have time off balance accruals available.

Can an employee choose to use their sick time because of fear of infection?

Employees cannot use sick time if they are not actually sick, in isolation, or quarantined. Employees should be reminded of the City’s Discrimination and EEO policies and ensure no one is harassed in the workplace because of national origin or recent travel. If the employee prefers to stay at home using their own paid time off balances, we encourage the employee to work with their supervisor and department head to review this time off request.

TABLE A: GUIDANCE FOR RECENT TRAVELERS AND/OR SICK EMPLOYEES

This chart can be used to determine if and when employees should be directed to go home by supervisors. Note that the pay status should be offered and recorded in the order indicated below (i.e. second option should only be utilized if the first option is not available or feasible).

Status	Off Work	Pay Status
Diagnosed	Yes	1. Sick Time 2. Other Leave Options
Exhibiting Symptoms – Directed to Go Home	Yes	1. Telecommuting option reviewed

		2. Other Leave Options
Exposure to Confirmed Case	Yes	1. Telecommuting option reviewed 2. Other Leave Options
Travel – Affected Areas* - Personal (if designated* during or after travel)	Yes	1. Telecommuting 2. PTO – Other Leave Options
Travel – Non Affected Areas	No	N/A
Vulnerable Populations (not sick)*	Yes, if requested	1. Telecommuting 2. PTO – Other 3. Other Leave Options
Concerned Populations – Occupational – Related Anxiousness	No	N/A
School Closure (COVID-19 related)	Case by Case Assessment by HR	1. Telecommuting 2. PTO - other

*as determined by the [Centers for Disease Control](#)

DOCTOR'S NOTES

Can we require a doctor's note for employees returning to work?

No. The City will not be requiring a doctor's note for employees who are sick with respiratory illness or flu-like symptoms to validate their illness or to return to work due to increased workload on medical professionals. However, if employees are sent home because they may have been exposed to the COVID-19 coronavirus or are diagnosed with COVID-19, please contact the Human Resources, who will work with Public Health for additional follow up, which may include requiring a doctor's note.

DOCTOR'S VISITS OR TELEMEDICINE (REMOTE HEALTH CARE)

Are there alternative options to visiting a doctor's office in person if an employee is ill?

Yes. Blue Shield CA and Kaiser Permanente provide telehealth/teledoc options allowing employees to visit with a doctor 24/7.

Blue Shield CA offers a website and mobile application providing online video visits with a doctor for medical advice, treatment plans, and prescriptions; members can register or log in by visiting <https://www.blueshieldca.com/teladoc/>.

Blue Shield of CA HMO
(800) 835-2362 Teladoc
(877)304-0504 Nurse Help 24/7

Kaiser Permanente members can call 1-833-574-2273 to schedule an appointment to speak with a licensed care provider 24/7 or have an online video visit with a doctor.

Kaiser

Telehealth Visits are intended to make it more convenient for you to receive covered Services, when a Plan Provider determines it is medically appropriate for your medical condition. You may receive covered Services via Telehealth Visits, when available and if the Services would have

been covered under this Evidence of Coverage (EOC) if provided in person. You are not required to use Telehealth visits.

Telehealth Visits:

Services described under "Telehealth Visits" in the "How to Obtain Services" section:

Interactive video visits:

- Primary Care Visits and Non-Physician Specialist Visits: no charge
- Physician Specialist Visits: no charge

Scheduled telephone visits:

- Primary Care Visits and Non-Physician Specialist Visits: no charge
- Physician Specialist Visits: no charge

Kaiser Appt and advice center:

1-800-218-1059

Anthem Blue Cross

- Traditional Basic Plan HMO
- PERS CARE
- PERS CHOICE

Triage and Screening Services:

If you have questions about a particular health condition or if you need someone to help you determine whether or not care is needed, please contact your primary care doctor. In addition, triage or screening services are available to you from us by telephone. Triage or screening services are the evaluation of your health by a doctor or nurse who is trained to screen for the purpose of determining the urgency of your need for care. Please contact the 24/7 **NurseLine at 1-800-700-9185**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)

Does family and medical leave apply to absences?

Yes. FMLA continues to apply for personal illness and/or family illness.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

The City's Employee Assistance Program is available for employees feeling anxious about exposure to the coronavirus (COVID-19). Employees needing assistance should be encouraged to contact the City's Employee Assistance Provider, The Standard, at (877)-851-1631.

TRAVEL

Can we prohibit a City employee from traveling on their personal time?

No. The City cannot prohibit such travel by an employee.

As a reminder, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid exposure. Managers/supervisors and employees should be instructed to take the same actions they would to avoid the flu, for example:

- Proactively work to assure non-essential group meetings do not take place. Use teleconference or virtual meetings options for large meeting groups.
- Wash hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick. Do not go to work. Contact your medical provider immediately.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Avoid handshakes and hugs and similar close contact. Instead, use verbal greetings.
- If someone in your household has tested positive for the coronavirus, keep the entire household at home. Do not go to work. Do not go to school. Contact your medical provider.
- Avoid work or social gatherings in groups of more than 10 people.
- Practice the “President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America”
https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf
- Per the CDC and “President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America”, if you are an older person, stay at home and away from other people.
- If you are a person with a serious underlying health condition that can put you at increased risk (for example, a condition that impairs your lung or heart function or weakens your immune system), stay home and away from others. If your children are sick, keep them at home. Do not send them to school. Contact your medical provider.

We will continue to provide updated information as practicable. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the HR Department at (323) 722-4805 ext. 2266. You can also access additional information online at the City’s website at <http://www.ci.commerce.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=1495&ART=3712&ADMIN=1>.