

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: March 13, 2020

To: All General Managers
City of Los Angeles

From: Wendy Macy, General Manager
Personnel Department

Subject: **CORONAVIRUS FAQs FOR CITY MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS**

The health and wellbeing of our employees is of paramount importance to our City leaders. Every employee deserves a safe and supportive workplace. Due to the rapidly evolving nature of the virus, the Personnel Department will maintain an updated coronavirus FAQ section on their website.

Most of these guidelines apply to **non-essential employees**; for essential employees, please contact HR for guidance. This is an emergency situation and none of these guidelines should be construed as a permanent change to policy.

BACKGROUND

A new virus first identified in Wuhan, China in late 2019 has been spreading 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 or 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 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 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 immediately prior to returning to work. The supervisor must then immediately notify their department Human Resources. 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), and 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 being exposed, the employees should be sent home (if possible, contact HR first) and can be assigned to telecommute (if available) or be placed on administrative leave with pay. After sending the employee home, HR will contact the Medical Services Division, if appropriate, who will work with Public Health for additional follow up.

If a City employee is observed exhibiting signs of an upper respiratory infection while at work, can we 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 be placed on administrative leave with pay. 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 Section 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 the Medical Services Division for additional follow up. If necessary, the Medical Services Division will contact LA County Public Health.

If the employee exhibiting signs of an upper respiratory infection refuses to go home, can we 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 (if available and able to work) or be placed on paid administrative leave.

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

Telecommuting options may be offered under certain circumstances (see chart below). The City is in the process of finalizing Emergency COVID-19 Telecommuting Participation Guidelines.

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

You should send home all employees who work 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, use any compensated time, or be placed on administrative leave with pay (see chart below). Before sending employees home, please contact your HR section (if possible) who will work with the Medical Services Division.

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 and the appointing authority, use any available compensated time off, or under very limited circumstances be placed on paid leave.

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 EEO policies and ensure no one is harassed in the workplace because of national origin or recent travel.

GUIDANCE FOR RECENT TRAVELERS AND/OR SICK EMPLOYEES

Below is a chart 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. Paid Leave
Exhibiting Symptoms - Directed to Go Home	Yes	1. Telecommuting 2. Paid Leave
Exposure to Confirmed Case	Yes	1. Telecommuting 2. Paid Leave
Travel - Affected Areas* - City	Yes	1. Telecommuting 2. Paid Leave
Travel - Affected Areas*- Personal (if area was designated* prior to travel)	Yes	1. Telecommuting 2. CTO
Travel - Affected Areas* - Personal (if designated* during or after travel)	Yes	1. Telecommuting 2. Paid Leave
Travel - Non-Affected Areas	No	N/A
Vulnerable Populations (not sick)*	Yes, if requested	1. Telecommuting 2. CTO 3. Paid Leave
Concerned Populations - Occupational-Related or Anxiousness	No	N/A
School Closure (COVID-19 related)	Case by Case Assessment	1. Telecommuting 2. CTO

* as determined by the [Centers for Disease Control website](https://www.cdc.gov)

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 Medical Services Division 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?

LAwell Program health plans Kaiser Permanente and Anthem provide telehealth options allowing employees to visit with a doctor 24/7. Anthem 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://livehealthonline.com/>. Kaiser 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.

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. Employees needing assistance should be encouraged to contact the City's Employee Assistance Provider, Optum at (866) 894-5795.

VOLUNTEERS AND UNPAID INTERNS

All volunteers and unpaid interns should be sent home until further notice.

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. 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.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Use verbal greetings in lieu of hand shakes or other greeting contact.
- Per the CDC, for those 60 years and older and with chronic conditions (i.e. diabetes, lung or heart disease), it is recommended to limit contact with others.

We will continue to provide updated information as practicable. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact your HR Section or Deborah Caruso at (213) 473-9055.