



Office of the Mayor
City of Columbus
Ohio

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Workplace Policy

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes the virus spreads mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching his or her own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

The Ohio Department of Health, Columbus Public Health and local public health jurisdictions continue to work collaboratively and closely with school systems, hospital systems, colleges and universities, and the business community to help minimize the spread of this disease.

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions. Because the health and safety of our employees are among the City's highest priorities, we want to reiterate the following guidance from the CDC:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid shaking hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your arm or inner elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants that are appropriate for the surface, following label instructions.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

WORKPLACE POLICY

The City will operate under all normal leave and workplace policies as set forth in the respective collective bargaining agreements and/or MCP/HACP except as may be provided herein. Any such provisions are consistent with Columbus Public Health recommendations and with action steps identified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

1. Release from Work/Leave Use

Employees are encouraged to stay at home if they are not feeling well or are exhibiting flu-like symptoms. Employees should remain at home until at least 24 hours after a fever is gone. Employees who report to work that are observed by a supervisor experiencing flu-like symptoms will be released from work by the Appointing Authority or designee, and may be directed to remain at home. Decisions to release an employee from work will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Appointing Authority or designee. Supervisor(s) shall not solicit the nature of any medical condition from an employee.

Employees will be required to use available sick leave for such absences, and may use other available leave balances upon exhaustion of all sick leave. If all available leave is exhausted, the Appointing Authority or designee may approve unpaid leave. No employee shall be disciplined for being absent without leave for a COVID-19 related event.

2. Report-In & Emergency Designation

When under a Declared Emergency by the Mayor of the City of Columbus, or unless otherwise directed, it is the policy of the City of Columbus that all offices remain open in the following capacity. Employees shall report to their primary work location based on their Emergency [E] Designation. Each Appointing Authority or designee shall designate employees based on operational need as follows:

- **[E-E] Essential Employees:** Employees designated as [E-E] are deemed critical to business operations and their physical presence at work during a Declared Emergency is required. Departments may consider establishing a centralized location or a designated meeting place at the opening of business. If an employee is absent, he/she will be expected to follow normal call-off procedures.
- **[E-R] Essential (REMOTE) Employees:** Employees designated as [E-R] are required to telecommute and remote-in to work. [E-R] employees shall not physically report to work, but are expected to perform duties as assigned from a remote location.
- **[E-N] Non-Essential Employees:** Employees designated as [E-N] shall not physically report to work and shall not be granted telecommuting privileges to remote-in.

Notification & Changes in Designation: Each Appointing Authority or designee will be responsible for notifying employees of their Emergency Designation. Appointing Authorities shall develop a plan for notifying employees of their Emergency Designation, activation in a Declared Emergency, and deactivation at the expiration of a Declared Emergency. If circumstances in a

Declared Emergency necessitate a change of an employee's designation, each Appointing Authority or designee shall notify employees immediately of their designation and provide instructions for reporting for work.

Pay & Benefits: During an Emergency Declaration, all full-time employees, regardless of Emergency Designation, will receive the default value of 80.0 regular hours of pay and maintain coverage under their applicable healthcare plan. (Refer to FAQ #3 and FAQ #15 for more details.)

Expiration: Emergency Designations will cease activation upon the expiration of an Emergency Declaration and upon resuming normal City of Columbus operations. All normal leave and workplace policies as set forth in the respective collective bargaining agreements and/or MCP/HACP shall resume.

3. Communications

Columbus Public Health will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and is working closely with the Ohio Department of Health, CDC, and local public health jurisdictions to ensure that timely and accurate information is provided. Public Access Television, Radio Broadcasts, Citywide voicemail, Citywide email, etc. will be used to communicate to employees.

Media inquiries will be centrally managed and all inquiries shall be directed to the Mayor's Office (attn.: Robin Davis, RCDavis@columbus.gov; 5-2425).

4. Payroll Processing

The City Auditor's Office, through Central Payroll has developed procedures to ensure the continuity of payroll operations in a Declared Emergency. (Refer to FAQ #3 for more details)

5. Benefit/Claims Administration

Employee Benefits will continue administering benefit payments (i.e., disability, workers' compensation, injury leave, etc.) and will ensure the continuity of claims administration (i.e., medical, prescription, dental, vision, etc.) in a Declared Emergency.

To support our employees, the City will cover the costs for all COVID-19 testing claims, effective immediately. This means that employees will have no cost share for covered COVID-19 tests.

Employees are also encouraged to use UnitedHealthcare's Virtual Visit service. There will be no cost share for this service due to a COVID-19 related event.

6. Remote Access To Work

Employees who are designated as [E-R] by their Appointing Authority or designee in a Declared Emergency shall access email and/or work operations from home or other distant locations. The terms of use will be governed in accordance with the City's Comprehensive Electronic Communication Policy and Citywide Guidelines for Telecommuting.

7. Customer Protocol

Departments may want to provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer at all customer stations and produce signage preventing customers with flu-like symptoms from entering the work site.

Departments may consider other customer service options such as telephone support, online transactions and drop boxes to process customer business and methods to communicate these business operations to customers.

8. Work Area

Employees should routinely clean or sanitize their workstations (including assigned City vehicles), telephones, and keyboards with anti-bacterial solution or wipes. Work areas should have tissues and alcohol-based hand sanitizer available for use. Employees should practice frequent hand washing, and cover your nose and mouth with your inner arm or elbow when coughing or sneezing.

9. Continuity of Government Plan

Appointing Authorities are responsible for developing their continuity of government plans. Details of the plans that specifically impact employees of Plants or other 24-hour operations will be provided to affected employees by the Appointing Authorities or designees.

10. Business Travel

Appointing Authorities shall prohibit international business travel. Appointing Authorities should limit domestic business travel and approve only mission-critical domestic business travel. Decisions regarding scheduled and future domestic business travel shall be made on a case-by-case basis.

11. Personal Travel

Should employees choose to travel for personal reasons, employees should be aware of the risks associated with travel and take necessary precautions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1) What is 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 can I do to help prevent the onset and/or spread of the COVID-19?

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid shaking hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your arm or inner elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants that are appropriate for the surface, following label instructions.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Stay informed. Follow public health advice. Refer to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov.

3) If the entire City is closed due to a COVID-19 outbreak, am I going to get paid and how?

Yes, if the City closes operations due to an outbreak, fulltime employees will receive a paycheck. How you get paid depends on where the payroll process stands within a pay period. If payday is approaching and current pay period entries are complete, payroll will be issued as normal. However, if payday is approaching but current pay period entries are not complete, full-time employees will be issued the default value of 80.0 regular hours. Part-time employees may not receive a paycheck until pay period entries of their actual time worked are complete. As necessary for any employee, adjustments will be processed during the next possible pay period.

4) Am I subject to being assigned to different work hours, shifts and/or locations?

Yes, for various reasons in a Declared Emergency (building closure, operational/functional need, etc.) we all may be required to work different hours, shifts and/or locations.

5) If an employee appears ill, can a supervisor inquire about the nature of the employee's illness?

No. A supervisor can neither solicit the nature of the illness nor request additional information related to the illness. That information must be volunteered by the employee. Supervisors who observe an employee who appears ill, should ask the employee if he/she is feeling well and encourage the employee to go home if he/she is sick.

6) If I am sent home from work due to COVID-19, or if I stay home due to COVID-19, how will I be paid?

First, stay home if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms. Use appropriate leave with proper approval pursuant to the terms of all collective bargaining agreements and/or MCP/HACP. In such cases, you will use sick leave. Other available leave may be used if and/or when sick leave is exhausted. Paychecks will continue to be processed through Central Payroll.

7) What if I do not have sufficient leave to cover my absence due to an incident of COVID-19, can I take unpaid leave?

In the event sufficient leave is not available, the Appointing Authority shall approve unpaid leave. Employees will not be disciplined for being absent without leave for a COVID-19 related event.

8) Although I am still employed, if I am directed to stay home and have no available leave, am I eligible for unemployment?

No.

9) My child's school/day care is closed due to an incident of COVID-19, and my child is not sick. I have no other child care arrangements. Can I bring the child to work with me?

No. Use appropriate leave with proper approval pursuant to the terms of all collective bargaining agreements and/or MCP/HACP. If no leave is available, promptly notify your supervisor of the reason for your absence and provide verification of school or facility closure. In such cases, employees will not be disciplined for being absent without leave.

10) During the COVID-19 outbreak can my supervisor cancel my vacation leave that has already been approved?

Yes. Your Appointing Authority or designee has the authority to cancel any pre-approved vacation requests.

11) Does FMLA apply if: a) I contract COVID-19, b) my spouse or child contracts COVID-19 and I stay home to care for him/her?

Yes, for eligible employees, it is likely that confirmed cases of COVID-19 will qualify under FMLA.

12) If I have a family member at home who is sick with COVID-19, should I go to work?

No. Household contacts will be asked to quarantine for 14 days. Your local public health jurisdiction will contact you for further guidance.

13) Does my supervisor have to approve my request to telecommute if there is a COVID-19 outbreak?

No. The Appointing Authority or designee shall make the determination for employees telecommuting.

14) What assistance is available to me to help me cope with the emotional impact of a COVID-19 outbreak?

The City of Columbus provides resources to help employees cope with these types of life events through its Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 645-6894.

15) Will my City-sponsored healthcare plan cover medical expenses associated with treatment for COVID-19?

Yes. Employees will have the same coverage that is currently available for any emergency or non-emergency illness. In addition, the City will cover the costs for all COVID-19 testing claims and UnitedHealthcare Virtual Visits so that employees have no cost share.

16) What if I use public transportation to travel to and from work, and due to COVID-19, the public transit system shuts down and I am unable to get to work?

It is important to plan ahead for this situation and look for other ways to travel to work. If you are unable to report to work, you will be required to take appropriate leave.

17) What should I do if I am a high-risk employee, as defined by the CDC?

Talk to your Appointing Authority or designee about alternative work arrangements.

Additional Sources of Information:

Ohio Department of Health Hotline
1-833-4-ASK-ODH
(1-833-427-5634)

www.cdc.gov/COVID19

www.columbus.gov/coronavirus

www.Coronavirus.ohio.gov