

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning COVID-19 and its impact on the Workplace

About COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

The Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) is a new or novel coronavirus, also called SARS-CoV-2. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness in animals and humans, including the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

There is no specific medical treatment or vaccine at present for COVID-19 infection. There is a great deal of information available on the Centers for Disease Control's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>, as well as on the Maryland Department of Health's website at <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Pages/Novel-coronavirus.aspx>.

UPDATED What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, unusual muscle or body aches, unusual headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, and in some cases, gastrointestinal symptoms.

How is COVID-19 treated?

Currently, there is no FDA-approved medication to treat COVID-19 infection. Individuals infected with the virus need to rest, get enough fluids, control fever and seek medical attention if symptoms intensify.

UPDATED Can COVID-19 be spread by a person who is not showing symptoms?

People are thought to be most contagious when they are symptomatic (the sickest); this is why the CDC recommends that these individuals be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on how sick they are) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others. The virus also has been detected in asymptomatic persons.

Where can I find policy guidance on dealing with COVID-19 in the workplace?

The Pandemic Flu and Other Infectious Diseases Attendance and Leave Policy is posted on the DBM website and may be viewed at the following link, along with information on screening protocols and other useful information:

<https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/COVID19.aspx>

The Pandemic Flu and Other Infectious Diseases Attendance and Leave Policy refers to a “flu-like illness.” What is a flu-like illness?

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A condition under which a person displays some or all the following symptoms typically associated with the flu: fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. Fever is usually described as temperature of 100.4° F or greater.

See also, *Guidelines for Reporting to Work*.

Congregate Care Facilities

What is a “congregate care” facility?

When you see this term in connection with the State’s response to COVID-19, it means a facility that consists of 24-hour supervision or care of inmates, patients, or youth within a State-run facility. These facilities are within the Departments of Health, Juvenile Services, Public Safety and Correctional Services and Veterans Affairs.

UPDATED What protocols are in place in congregate care facilities?

Screening protocols are in place at the entrance to each facility, which includes a temperature check and screening questions.

See also, *Guidelines for Reporting to Work*.

Contractual Employees

UPDATED Should a contractual employee report to work if the employee’s job duties cannot be performed remotely?

In accordance with the Maryland State Government Workforce Re-Entry Protocols, agencies will begin the process of returning employees on administrative leave to State offices. This process began on June 8, 2020 and includes contractual employees who have been on administrative leave. Employees will be notified to return to work by their employing agency when the employing agency has taken the necessary steps to ensure that the workplace is safe for returning employees.

See also, *National Guard*.

COVID-19 Response Pay

What is “COVID-19 Response Pay”?

This is a pay enhancement that will be paid to employees in eligible classifications. Typically, eligible classifications are emergency essential or mission critical positions within 24/7 institutions who perform work in close, prolonged contact with inmates, youth, wards of the State, or with clients in a field setting with no opportunity for social distancing.

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How much is paid to an employee who is eligible for COVID-19 Response Pay?

Employees who are eligible for this pay enhancement will receive an additional \$3.13 for each hour actually worked, up to approximately \$250 in a pay period.

Paid time off will not count for the purposes of determining the employee's COVID-19 Response Pay, but employees who work additional shift hours will receive the pay for actual hours worked.

Will an employee who is teleworking or working in an office environment be permitted to earn COVID-19 Response Pay?

No.

How will employees be compensated if the employee performs some office work or teleworks part of the time and spends time in the field in close contact with clients?

Typically, this type of intermittent field work is performed by certain employees of the Departments of Human Services and Public Safety and Correctional Services. If an employee of one of these departments is required to make home visits that bring the employee into close, prolonged contact with clients of the State, with no opportunity for social distancing, the employee may be eligible for the COVID-19 Response Pay. If eligible for the pay enhancement, the employee will receive it only for hours worked in the field.

If an employee is required to work directly with inmates, youth or patients who are placed in isolation because of suspected or lab-confirmed COVID-19, does the employee earn COVID-19 Response Pay?

Employees who are required to work in these designated "quarantine areas," where inmates, youth or patients have been placed in isolation will receive Response Pay of \$3.13/hour for each hour actually worked, and also will receive \$2.00 per hour for each hour actually worked in the isolation area for a total of \$5.13 an hour for the time worked in the quarantine area. This additional pay enhancement is called "Elevated COVID-19 Response Pay."

UPDATED When does the COVID-19 Response Pay go into effect and when does it end?

The pay enhancement went into effect on April 1, 2020 and has been extended through June 30, 2020.

Emergency Paid Sick Leave

What is "Emergency Paid Sick Leave"?

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It is a form of paid sick leave that is available to regular, contractual, and temporary State employees if they are unable to work for a qualifying reason. These qualifying reasons are:

- (1) The employee is subject to a federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19.
- (2) The employee has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.
- (3) The employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and is seeking a medical diagnosis.
- (4) The employee is caring for an individual subject to a federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19, or the employee is caring for an individual who has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.
- (5) The employee is caring for a son or daughter whose school or place of care is closed, or childcare provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions.
- (6) The employee is experiencing substantially similar conditions as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury.

More information concerning Emergency Paid Sick Leave including the rate at which an employee may be paid, which depends on the reason for the use of the leave, may be found on DBM's website at: <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx>.

Expanded Family and Medical Leave Act

What is the Expanded Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)?

Expanded FMLA is a period of leave that may be used if an employee is unable to work due to the need to care for a son or daughter under 18 if the child's school or place of care has been closed or if the childcare provider is unavailable due to a public health emergency. It expands the existing FMLA to permit an absence for this reason but does not lengthen the period that is permitted for FMLA-qualifying absence, which remains a total of 12 weeks in a rolling 12-month period.

More information concerning Expanded FMLA may be found on DBM's website at: <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx>.

Guidelines for Reporting to Work

What will happen if an employee reports to work with fever, recent onset of cough that is not attributable to allergies or habits like smoking, shortness of breath, or other flu-like symptoms?

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When an employee is ill, the employee should take leave to recover and prevent the spread of illness. When an employee is exhibiting symptoms like fever, recent onset of cough or shortness of breath, the employee should self-quarantine for a period of at least 10 days. The employee may return to work after these three things have happened: there has been no fever for 72 hours (i.e., three full days) without the use of fever reducing medication, other symptoms have improved, and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

Under these conditions an employee may qualify for Emergency Paid Sick Leave.

See also, *Quarantine*.

If an employee has been tested and is positive for COVID-19, what should happen?

The same protocol should be followed for an employee who has tested positive as for one who is symptomatic but has not been tested. The sick employee should stay home for a period of at least 10 days. The employee may return to work after these three things have happened: there has been no fever for 72 hours (i.e., three full days) without the use of fever reducing medication, other symptoms have improved, and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

An employee under these conditions may qualify for Emergency Paid Sick Leave.

See also, *Quarantine*.

If an employee has been in close, prolonged contact with a symptomatic person who is pending a test or has tested positive for COVID-19 what should the employee do?

If the employee works in an office setting, the employee should remain home for 14 days.

Employees who work in congregate care settings are deemed critical infrastructure employees. If it is not possible for the employee to remain home for 14 days, the employee may work under the following conditions:

- The employee's temperature should be taken, and an assessment should occur to ensure that the employee is not reporting symptoms prior to starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the employee enters the facility.
- If the employee does not have a temperature or symptoms, the employee should self-monitor under the supervision of the agency's occupational health program.
- The employee should always wear a face mask.
- The employee should always practice social distancing.

Regular cleaning and disinfection of work areas is necessary, especially "high-touch" areas.

If, at any time, the employee develops symptoms, the employee may not return to work until these three things have happened: there has been no fever for at least 72 hours (i.e., three full

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days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers), other symptoms have improved, and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

An employee under these conditions may qualify for Emergency Paid Sick Leave. See <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx> for information about Emergency Paid Sick Leave.

See also, *Quarantine*.

How should an agency handle an employee who has been in the same indoor environment (like an office space) as a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 for longer than 15 minutes, but who does not meet the definition of having had close contact (within 6 feet) with the individual?

There are no work restrictions, but the employee should self-monitor for symptoms. If symptoms develop the employee should take leave to self-quarantine for at least 10 days.

If the employee develops symptoms, the employee may not return to work until these three things have happened: there has been no fever for at least 72 hours (i.e., three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers), other symptoms have improved, and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

Under these conditions an employee may qualify for Emergency Paid Sick Leave. See <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx> for information about Emergency Paid Sick Leave.

Health Benefits

Will the State's health insurance plans pay for testing for COVID-19?

The State Employee and Retiree Health & Welfare Medical Plans will cover medically necessary diagnostic tests that are consistent with CDC guidance related to COVID-19 at no cost to the member.

How will COVID-19 affect a member's ability to obtain prescription drugs?

The State Employee and Retiree Health & Welfare Prescription Drug Plan is waiving early medication refill limits on maintenance medications and encouraging members to use their 90-day mail order benefit (Free Home Delivery). Member cost sharing will apply as normal. In the event of shortage or access issues for prescription drugs due to COVID-19, the State will ensure formulary flexibility as needed.

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What if an employee needs to add a dependent because of a marriage or birth or other qualifying event and cannot get the necessary documentation due to COVID-19 related closures of courts and other offices?

Employees may add dependents or make other health benefits related changes in accordance with established timeframes for doing so. If an employee is unable to get the necessary documentation relating to the addition or change to the employee's health benefits, the employee will be given up to 30 days after the Governor declares an end to the State of Emergency announced on March 5, 2020 to provide the necessary documentation.

Due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency, if an employee now needs to obtain dependent day care can the employee enroll in a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (FSA)?

Yes, a need for dependent care not previously required is considered a change in cost and creates an opportunity to enroll in the Dependent Care FSA. If the employee expects this need to be temporary, the employee should calculate carefully the expected cost being mindful that Workday will calculate the per pay cost through December 31, 2020.

What can an employee do if the employee's daycare provider is closed due to the declared State of Emergency because of COVID-19?

If the employee is enrolled in a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account and the daycare provider's closure has reduced the employee's daycare provider costs to a lower amount or no charge, the employee is eligible to change the annual deferral to an amount greater than or equal to the amount deducted to date.

See also, *Leave Issues*

How does an employee process a change to (or elect) a Dependent Care FSA if COVID-19 has caused a change in circumstances for the employee?

The change should be processed in Workday using event: Employee: Change in Dependent Daycare. The event will be reviewed and presuming it meets IRS requirements, approved by the Employee Benefits Division.

Questions should be directed to EBD.Mail@Maryland.gov

Leave Issues

How much information may an employer request from an employee who calls in sick?

Guidance from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) states that employers may ask if employees are experiencing COVID-19-related symptoms. Any information received about employee illnesses must be maintained confidentially and discussed with only those who have a "need to know," such as the appropriate agency human resources professional.

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For questions related to documentation and notice requirements associated with the use of Emergency Paid Sick Leave, please see the guidance provided on the DBM's website: <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx>

If an employee is sick with a flu-like illness while at work, should the employee go home?

Yes, employees who are ill should take sick leave to recover at home to avoid spreading illness at work. Employees may be eligible to use Emergency Paid Sick Leave. More information on can be found on DBM's website at: <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx>

In an Elevated Level II status under the Pandemic Flu and Other Infectious Diseases Attendance and Leave Policy, an employee who does not have paid leave available may request Advanced Sick Leave, or in the case of temporary employees, advanced paid time off (refer to the Advanced Sick Leave Policy issued in March 2020) to deal with the employee's own illness or that of an immediate family member.

If an employee is sick, but asymptomatic, or caring for an immediate family member who is ill and wishes to work remotely, agencies are being encouraged to permit telework, if possible, or use a combination of telework and leave to promote social distancing.

If an employee has a flu-like illness, does leave have to be approved by the supervisor before the employee may leave the worksite?

An employee must notify a supervisor prior to leaving work due to illness. If an employee is requesting a form of leave other than sick leave, supervisors are encouraged to err on the side of caution and approve leave liberally in order to prevent the spread of illness in the workplace.

If an employee has had a flu-like illness, when can they return to work?

Employees should remain out of work for a minimum of 10 days from the onset of a flu-like illness. The employee may not return until: the employee is fever-free (without the use of fever reducing medications) for 72 hours, the employee experiences an improvement in other symptoms, and at least 10 days have passed since the symptoms first appeared.

It is expected that hospitals, urgent care centers and doctors' offices will be overwhelmed by patients seeking treatment. For this reason, while Level II is in effect, an employee will not be required to provide medical documentation upon return to work for a flu-like illness, even if the employee has been out sick for five or more consecutive days or is on a sick leave control measure (i.e., one-day doctor's note requirement).

Normal documentation requirements are in effect for absence due to a non-flu-like reason.

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For questions related to documentation and notice requirements associated with the use of Emergency Paid Sick Leave, please see the guidance provided on DBM's website: <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx>

Can supervisors ask employees what type of medications they are taking to help determine if they may have COVID-19 or whether they can return to work?

Employers may ask if an employee has taken a fever-reducing medication but should not inquire further.

Can employees who are not sick, but are afraid to come to work because of COVID-19 stay home and use leave?

Concern about COVID-19 is understandable, but employees should be encouraged to prepare, not panic. If an employee makes a request to take leave for any reason unrelated to the employee's own illness or that of an immediate family member, supervisory approval is required.

If an employee is advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to COVID-19 concerns (including higher risk concerns), then the employee may be eligible to use Emergency Paid Sick Leave. Please see DBM's website at: <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx>.

If an employee needs to be off work while on administrative leave, does the employee have to take earned leave?

It depends.

If the employee is out on a period of paid or unpaid leave unrelated to COVID-19 that began before the State entered an elevated Level II status on March 12, 2020, the employee remains on paid or unpaid leave through the anticipated end date of the absence.

An employee who has been placed on administrative leave must be available by phone if the supervisor has work for the employee to do. If the employee cannot be available, the employee must request leave.

See also, *Guidelines for Reporting to Work*.

What can an employee do if a child's school or daycare facility is closed, or childcare provider is unavailable, because of COVID-19 precautions?

Employees may be eligible for leave under expanded Family and Medical Leave Act and Emergency Paid Sick Leave provisions. More information on can be found here: <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx>

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National Guard

What happens now that the President has issued orders to members of the National Guard?

On March 12, 2020, Governor Hogan activated the National Guard under Title 10, and in early April 2020, some members of the Guard received Orders under Title 32, which activates the Guard at the federal level.

Permanent State employees who have received orders under Title 32, specifically to perform duties in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis, no longer will be permitted to use the COVID-19 administrative leave code and will not be eligible for full pay. Instead, these employees will be placed on a Military Administrative Leave – Leave of Absence and will be eligible for the difference between their regular State pay and the military Guard pay if the State pay is higher. Please note that the Military Administrative Leave (allowance) under Title 32 is being paid only if the orders specifically indicate that the activation is for COVID-19.

Normally, temporary State employees would go into an unpaid leave status when called up, but under the circumstances presented by COVID-19, these employees also will be eligible for the difference between their regular State pay and the military Guard pay (Military Administrative Leave Allowance), if the State pay is higher. Contractual and temporary employees who were activated under Title 32 must turn in their orders to their State Agency HR Office with their military pay statement so the HR Office can determine if the employee is eligible for the Military Administrative Leave Allowance.

Under normal conditions, will National Guard Members be eligible for Military Administrative Leave under Title 32 (federal orders)?

No, the exceptions to pay National Guard Members Military Administrative Leave is only during the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis and orders must specifically indicate the purpose is for COVID-19. Any Title 32 orders not related to COVID-19 will be handled in accordance with State law.

Will State pay continue if the employee is a temporary employee (TE) or contractual employee who is called to Active Duty by the Governor?

Yes. An exception has been made to allow for the TE or contractual employee's State employment check to continue while the employee is on State Active Duty in support of COVID-19 operations.

Will State pay continue if the employee is a temporary employee (TE) or contractual employee who is called to Active Duty by the President of the United States?

While the TE or contractual employee is on State Active Duty in support of COVID-19 operations, the employee will receive the difference between their State pay and their duty pay if

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the State pay is greater. Employees must provide their Agency HR Office with their new Title 32 orders and pay statements to be eligible. Any State employee pay will end when the TE status ends, when the contract expires, or when the employee is released from active duty, whichever occurs first.

How does a State employee who also is in the National Guard get paid when called to Active Duty by the Governor or the President of the United States?

State Active Duty National Guard pay will be paid every two weeks by the Central Payroll Bureau (CPB) during the contractual pay week, but it will be separate from the employee's State Regular position pay. The National Guard pay most likely will be paid via a check mailed to the employee's home address, unless CPB received and processed a Direct Deposit form for the employee's Active Duty Service. It normally takes one to two pay periods for Direct Deposit to be set up after CPB receives the form.

How should an employee's timesheet be coded for the time the employee is on State Active Duty due to COVID-19 operations?

If the employee is called to Active Duty by the Governor of Maryland to assist with COVID-19 operations, the employee is entitled to paid administrative leave for the duration of the State Active Duty. The employee's timesheet for this period will be coded based on employee type (regular/non-temporary, contractual, and temporary), as follows:

- **Regular/non-temporary employee:** COVID-19 Admin Leave for Regular (Timesheet) Time Off.
- **Contractual employee:** COVID-19 Admin Leave for Contract (Timesheet) Time Off.
- **Temporary Emergency employee:** COVID-19 Admin Leave for Temp (Timesheet) Time Off.

If a Maryland State employee has orders for Active Duty from another State's Governor to assist with COVID-19 missions, is the employee eligible for any pay differential under for their regular State position?

During the COVID-19 public health crisis, National Guard members who are called to active duty by another State's Governor will be eligible for an allowance under Military Administrative Leave, if the orders indicate COVID-19 and if the employees Maryland State salary is higher than the National Guard pay. Orders and the National Guard pay statement must be submitted to the Agency HR office.

Quarantine

When is it appropriate for an employee to self-quarantine?

There are a variety of scenarios in which it may be appropriate for an employee to self-quarantine, including:

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- If the employee has fever, the recent onset of cough that the employee cannot attribute to allergies or habits like smoking, if the employee has shortness of breath or other flu-like symptoms.
- If the employee has been laboratory-confirmed positive for COVID-19.
- If the employee has had close contact (within 6 feet) for a prolonged period (longer than 15 minutes) with a person suspected of having COVID-19 or who has been lab-confirmed positive for COVID-19.
- If the employee has been advised to self-quarantine by the employee's health care provider.
- If the employee has returned from a cruise ship or river cruise.

Does an employee have to use their own leave under scenarios where self-quarantine is appropriate?

Employees may be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick Leave depending on the employee's unique circumstance. Additional steps may be required on the employee's part to qualify for Emergency Paid Sick Leave. Further guidance can be found here:

<https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx>

Employees who are turned away from their assigned work location for refusing to submit to a screening are not qualified for Emergency Paid Sick Leave.

When can an employee who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 come out of quarantine?

An employee who has self-quarantined because of a diagnosis of COVID-19 or suspicion that the employee has contracted the virus can stop home isolation under the following conditions:

- The employee has had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers), **AND**
- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when cough or shortness of breath have improved), **AND**
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

See also, *Guidelines for Reporting to Work*.

Screenings in the Workplace

UPDATED When may an ADA-covered employer perform a temperature check of an employee during a pandemic event?

When an outbreak becomes sufficiently severe or widespread, as assessed by the CDC or State or local public health officials, temperature checks may be instituted. Temperature checks have been instituted in 24/7 facilities and some other departments.

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See also, *Guidelines for Reporting to Work*.

Telework

If employees are teleworking, will they be reimbursed for paper, printer ink and any other supplies used for work purposes?

Employees who telework may use State property, when available, to accomplish their duties. If supplies are needed, supervisors should determine if the supplies are available to take home. Employees also are encouraged to explore alternate solutions to printing, such as scanning and emailing, when possible.

How would a school closure affect an employee who is teleworking to promote social distancing in response to COVID-19?

Normally, an employee who is teleworking must be free of childcare duties, but while we are in Level II of the Pandemic Flu and Other Infectious Diseases Attendance and Leave Policy, supervisors have been encouraged to take a more flexible approach to permit an employee to work around their childcare duties. This may involve permitting an employee to start and stop work, as necessary, understanding that the employee must accurately record work time.

If an employee wants to work a flexible schedule, the first thing the employee should do is make the request to the supervisor to ensure that the employee's current job duties can be accomplished off hours. If it is feasible, the supervisor should discuss with HR and the agency's timekeeper to request that the proper "compressed schedule" indicator is added to Workday and to provide the employee with instructions on how to complete the timesheet while on a compressed schedule. The schedule must be balanced for both weeks in the pay period (e.g., in the case of a full-time employee, 40 hours must be accounted for in each week by work hours or work hours and leave). The work week begins on Wednesday and ends on Tuesday.

In cases where an employee is unable to work, or telework, because an employee is caring for a son or daughter whose school or place of care is closed, or childcare provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions, provisions under expanded Family and Medical Leave Act and Emergency Paid Sick Leave may apply for leave taken from April 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. More information can be found here: <https://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/FFCRA.aspx>

Transportation

UPDATED What if public transportation providers stop operating and employees are unable to get to their worksite using public transportation?

Service interruptions are unlikely, but employees who are designated as emergency essential/mission critical who cannot telework due to the nature of their job duties are expected

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to report to work. Supervisors are encouraged to be as flexible as possible in dealing with issues that arise due to interruptions in public transportation service.

Travel

If an employee contracted COVID-19 while traveling, would regular health insurance cover those health expenses?

If someone contracts COVID-19 while traveling, the coverage for health expenses would be determined based on the employee's health insurance or any additional insurance the employee may have purchased. Coverage is subject to plan provisions including medical necessity in the event of an urgent or emergent need.

Is there a State policy in the event a State employee is quarantined either in a foreign country or upon return to the U.S.? How would that be addressed in terms of time off/teleworking, and costs incurred such as hotel and meal costs?

If an employee is traveling for non-business purposes and can telework, that would be the ideal solution. Any hotel/meal costs would be the responsibility of the employee. If the employee is unable to work remotely, the employee would need to request leave. If the employee does not have accrued leave to cover the period of quarantine, during the period that the State is in Level II of the Pandemic Flu and Other Infectious Diseases Attendance and Leave Policy, the employee may request advanced sick leave.

Is there any specific action that should be taken when an employee returns from a cruise?

Yes, the employee should be placed on administrative leave for 14 days from the time that the employee returned home from a cruise ship or river cruise based on CDC guidelines. The employee should practice social distancing in this time period and take his or her temperature with a thermometer two times a day to monitor for fever and watch for cough or trouble breathing.

Working in State Offices

NEW Are masks required to be worn while in a State office space?

Yes, employees must always wear a mask while inside a State building or office space unless the employee has a medical condition that prevents the wearing of a mask or the employee is in an enclosed office or cubicle area that is more than 6 feet away from the nearest individual.

If an employee has a medical condition that prevents the use of a mask, the employee will be required to provide medical documentation. Once the condition is certified, the agency HR Office will provide the employee with a letter excusing the employee from the mask requirement. This document may be presented upon entry to State offices.

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If an employee refuses to wear a mask when required to do so, appropriate action may be taken including sending the employee home on unauthorized leave without pay and imposing disciplinary action, if deemed appropriate by the appointing authority.

NEW Will the State provide employees with masks?

No. Since Maryland citizens are required to wear masks while in office and retail areas throughout the State, it is presumed that employees have masks. Employees will be expected to wear their own masks while in State offices and buildings.

NEW What will happen if an employee arrives at work without a mask?

A mask is required to enter a State office or building. The Department of General Services will have a limited supply of disposable masks at building entrances for employees and visitors who forget their masks; however, if the supply is exhausted, entry will be denied. An employee's appointing authority may choose to put an employee on unauthorized leave without pay and take disciplinary action if deemed appropriate.

NEW Can an employee choose not to wear a mask if others in the office agree?

No. Employees must always wear a mask in State offices or buildings unless the employee has a medical excuse or while the employee is working in an enclosed office or cubicle area that is more than 6 feet away from others.

NEW What should an employee do if a co-worker is not wearing a mask?

If the employee feels comfortable doing so, the employee may remind the coworker of the requirement to wear a mask. Alternatively, the employee may report the issue to the employee's supervisor or the agency Human Resources Director.

NEW Will office spaces be reconfigured to enforce social distancing?

Yes, employees who are required to report to work in a State office will be stationed in a workspace that is at least 6 feet from other employees. If an employee has a concern that their workstation does not provide a distance of at least 6 feet from other employees, this concern should be reported to the supervisor or agency Human Resources Director.

NEW What should an employee do if a co-worker or supervisor will not adhere to the requirement to maintain a social distance of 6 feet?

If the employee feels comfortable doing so, the employee may remind the individual of the need to maintain at least 6 feet from others. Alternatively, the employee should report this issue to the supervisor or agency Human Resources Director, as appropriate.

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NEW **Has the State implemented any additional cleaning protocols to ensure workspaces are disinfected?**

The Department of General Services has ensured that its vendors are cleaning workspaces in accordance with CDC guidance using EPA-recommended cleaning supplies.

NEW **Will individual workspaces be cleaned each evening?**

No. Each employee is responsible for cleaning their own personal workspace each day and preferably several times a day.