

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Mayor's Office



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INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: All Employees
FROM: James R. Engler
DATE: February 24, 2021
SUBJECT: 8th Policy Statement re: COVID-19

As the City continues its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, extra caution is necessary to safely operate and prevent disease spread. We must emphasize, despite COVID fatigue, the need to remain diligent about the safety precautions we have implemented. Safety measures such as social distancing and wearing masks will continue to be important in our fight against the virus. We have strategically reopened City services across departments, dedicated additional resources to those who can work from home, and continue to champion policy changes that assist our workforce. We remain committed to revising this policy statement during the COVID-19 pandemic to account for evolving public health guidelines, recently-passed laws and statutes, and the City's changing operational needs. Accordingly, we are modifying our policy statement. Once the COVID-19 pandemic threat has passed, City employees should expect to return to any original policies or procedures in effect pre-COVID.

City operations and functions will remain open when possible in accordance with the City's Safe Return to Work guidelines using strategies to maintain the safety of both our workforce and our customers.

City Operations

Onsite Work – Appointing Authorities, in accordance with all COVID-19 precautions and reopening plans, will identify those employees whose presence is required to complete necessary tasks in support of City services or programs. Onsite staff should be rotated whenever possible to ensure that no City employee works onsite longer than necessary to support ongoing City operations. Onsite work must be managed according to the City's Safe Return to Work

Guidelines, which can be found under the HR Info & Policies section of the City's [Remote Work website](#). All employees must complete:

- the self-administered assessment at <https://www.phila.gov/employee-screener/#/>,
- the supervisor-administered assessment, or
- an alternative assessment approved by Kendall Banks, Director of Safety and Loss Prevention preferably before entering their work location.

Offsite Work and Work-from-Home – Appointing authorities are encouraged to authorize City employees, who are capable, to work from home wherever possible to minimize onsite staff. As has been the case since the last update, appointing authorities may require employees to perform any and all types of work from home. Appointing Authorities should identify which tasks/functions of their respective departments can be performed from home, and which personnel will be tasked with completing the identified tasks/functions. City employees working from home, to the extent possible, must follow the guidelines set forth in the [Virtual Work Policy for City Employees](#).

Alternate Work Schedules – We continue to stress the use of alternative work schedules where appropriate to reduce workplace contact and to support employees balancing other obligations caused by the pandemic. Supervisors and managers should assess where such a schedule would be advantageous and work with labor relations representatives when necessary.

Public Health Guidelines

Self-Quarantine – We continue to emphasize the need to self-quarantine as a method of reducing exposure risk. Employees who meet any of the following criteria bulleted below and are not healthcare workers¹ or congregant care workers², must notify their Appointing Authority or designee immediately and, if asymptomatic, will be required to self-quarantine for either ten days or seven days with a negative COVID-19 test taken after day five. Employees may choose whether to adhere to the ten-day quarantine period or take a COVID test to return earlier. Employees returning to work should continue to self-monitor for symptoms for fourteen days after exposure, and diligently follow masking protocols during that period, including wearing masks while in offices or cubicles.

- Employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, dry cough, shortness of breath) who are being evaluated as a person under investigation for COVID-19;
- Employees who are required to comply with a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
- Employees who have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19; or;

¹ City healthcare workers should follow the guidance detailed [here](#).

² City congregant care workers should follow the guidance detailed [here](#).

- Employees who have come into close contact with an individual who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. See CDC guidelines for employees who are fully vaccinated or who have recently recovered from COVID-19.

Employees who have received a diagnosis of COVID-19 should follow the direction of their health care provider and directions of the Department of Public Health. Those employees who have received clearance from their health care provider, may return to work, after their isolation period. Where possible, employees on self-quarantine who are well enough to work may work from home for all or some of this time in accordance with the [Virtual work Policy for City Employees](#).

At-Risk Employees – Employees with a medically-documented greater risk of harm from the virus, such as those with compromised immune systems, should inform their Appointing Authority. Where appropriate, the Appointing Authority should take this into consideration when assigning onsite tasks. Appointing Authorities should engage in the interactive process to determine what accommodation may be made for employees faced with this situation.

Meetings – All meetings should be held virtually whenever possible. If onsite meetings are to be held, pandemic occupancy limits in the room consistent with Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) guidelines, appropriate masking and physical distancing must be enforced (i.e., sitting at least 6 ft apart).

Official Travel – All official, non-essential international and domestic travel within the next 60 days on behalf of City government is now suspended.

Leave Usage

General Leave Usage – Employees who are required to work, either onsite or offsite, and, do not complete their regularly scheduled shift as assigned because they chose not to or for personal reasons, must use approved leave such as vacation, compensatory time or sick leave. If the leave is not approved, the employee will be marked AWOL.

Probationary Leave Usage – Employees may use vacation and sick leave for COVID-related issues during their probationary period.

Advanced Sick Leave – Employees, including probationary employees, after exhausting all accrued leave, may use up to 10 days of sick leave per calendar year in advance of earning such leave. Advanced sick leave may only be used when the employee is absent from duty to the employee's illness, or when the employee must be absent from duty to care for a dependent who lives in the employee's home and is ill.

Sick Leave Documentation – Physician's notes provided or signed electronically, including those provided subsequent to telemedicine visits, may be used to satisfy sick leave documentation requirements. Additionally, although onsite employees must either take the screening questionnaire or follow other approved departmental processes for ensuring that they are not at risk for transmitting the virus, screening questionnaire responses cannot be used as medical documentation to comply with sick leave policies.

The following documents noting that an employee must quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure may be used to satisfy leave documentation requirements for quarantine periods:

- a physician’s certification;
- an official contact tracer notification;
- documentation from a Pandemic Coordinator, departmental safety professional or HR professional requiring quarantine due to potential workplace COVID-19 contact.

Please note that employees are strongly encouraged to utilize telemedicine to reduce risk of exposure to or transmission of COVID-19 in obtaining sick leave documentation.

Dependent Care Leave Usage – Employees may use sick leave to care for dependents due to COVID-related school or daycare closures as follows:

1. Employees previously eligible for FMLA+ may use up to ten weeks’ sick leave;
2. Employees previously not eligible for FMLA+ may use up to twenty days’ sick leave.

Accumulated leave may be used intermittently, including in combination with working from home (COVID-Offsite) with the appropriate departmental approvals.

Additionally, all employees may use up to twenty days’ sick leave to care for a dependent who is either quarantined or isolated due to COVID-19 exposure/infection.

Dependent Care Leave Documentation – To request Dependent Care Leave Usage as described above, employees, should continue to complete *the* FFCRA Leave Request Form *previously used for* FMLA+ and submit it to their supervisor or HR manager. The form requires the employee attest the information provided is accurate and complete. Falsification of any information will lead to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

COVID Excused Time – Employees will only be granted COVID Excused Time for time in which they are unable to complete job duties due to the lack of work or to comply with social distancing guidelines, or if they are required to self-quarantine at the direction of a departmental safety officer or human resources professional due to close contact with an individual potentially infected with COVID-19 while at work.

Childcare Resources

There are childcare openings across Philadelphia for school age children. Subsidized childcare is also available for the school day. Please contact the ELRC at 1-888-461-KIDS (5437) for more information.

PHLpreK, the City’s free quality pre-K program is enrolling for the 2020-2021 school year at 130+ childcare centers throughout the city. There is still time to enroll. [View the list of PHLpreK centers with openings.](#)

Access Centers are opening to serve the City’s most vulnerable children while fully-digital learning is in place, providing eligible K–6 students with a safe, supervised environment. Access Centers are located at Parks & Recreation, Free Library, and Office of Children and Families

Out-of-School time network sites. Prior registration is required and site capacity is limited to adhere to health and safety guidelines. [Learn more about Access Centers.](#)

Emergency Updates

Emergency Messaging – We strongly encourage employees to opt-in to receiving emergency messages regarding any ongoing City issues by providing cell phone numbers if they want text message updates. Updates will also be provided by email, and, in some cases, by phone. We also recommend that all employees stay up to date on the status of COVID-19 both internally and in the City by visiting the City’s site dedicated to the COVID-19 outbreak: phila.gov/COVID-19 and opting into text messages by texting COVIDPHL to 888-777.