



# COVID-19 Employee Guide

## **Employee COVID-19 Guidance**

Faribault County staff is currently working to update plans, policies, and understandings to address specific service area impacts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the COVID-19 outbreak is broadening we want to remind employees of absence policies and what employees can utilize for paid leave or an unpaid leave, whether an employee is sick, needed at home to care for a family member who is sick, or is put into isolation or a quarantine state. Additional information on COVID-19 can be found on the Minnesota Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites.

Please know that as things progress and change, so may our policies, procedures, and understandings.

## **Communication**

### **How the County will communicate with employees?**

Communications to staff is very important during times of uncertainty. Ensuring employees can receive information via email, website and/or text messaging and phone calls becomes the quickest means possible. Checking your emails and/or phone frequently will be beneficial to stay in communication with your supervisor and department head. E-mail will likely be our primary means of contact, **but please make sure your supervisor has up to date contact information for you (e.g., cell phone number).**

## **COVID-19 Virus & Your Health**

### **What are the current symptoms of COVID-19?**

People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms or combinations of symptoms may have COVID-19:

*Fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea*

### **What to do if you feel ill?**

At the first sign of illness, you should leave work immediately to avoid exposing coworkers and stay home until you are completely recovered, or the pandemic flu virus has been ruled out. Notify your supervisor immediately.

## **When should I stay home and/or return to work?**

When employees can return to work and be around others depends on different factors for different situations.

### Exhibiting Symptoms

Per CDC's recommendations, employees should stay home (except to get medical care) if they feel sick or think they might have COVID-19. Employees who exhibit symptoms listed above are recommended to stay home and not come to work until:

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appear, and
- at least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication and symptoms have improved, and
- other symptoms have improved.

It is extremely important that you communicate any symptoms of acute respiratory illness with your supervisor and/or department head.

### Tests Positive, No Symptoms

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 but has no other symptoms, the employee may return to work after 10 days have passed since the positive test, as long as the employee does not exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms during that 10 day timeframe.

### Tests Negative, Exhibiting Symptoms

If an employee tests negative for COVID-19 but exhibits COVID-like symptoms, the employee may return to work 24 hours after symptoms have subsided.

### Close Contact With COVID-Positive Person

If an employee has been in close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19, the employee has two options based on testing availability:

Diagnostic testing **available**: employee should stay home and quarantine:

Negative test result, collected on Day 6 or 7 – quarantine ends Day 7

Positive test result – quarantine ends Day 10

(Day 1 starts day of symptom onset or test date for those who don't exhibit symptoms)

Diagnostic testing **unavailable**: employee should stay home and quarantine for 10 days without testing and if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring, quarantine can end after Day 10.

If an employee exhibits symptoms within the 7 – 10-day quarantine period, it is recommended to contact your healthcare provider and get tested for COVID-19.

## **General Self-Quarantine Guidelines**

- Stay at home and do not go to work or participate in any on-site work-related activities.
- Stay home except to get medical care and call ahead before visiting your doctor.

- Stay away from public areas including grocery stores, malls, theaters and large public gathering spaces.
- Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; wash your hands afterward with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water or with an alcohol-based sanitizer; use soap and water preferentially if your hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- Clean “high-touch” surfaces daily with a household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Monitor your symptoms and if they develop or worsen then call your health care provider BEFORE seeking in-person care.

**If my job requires me to work with the public, do I have to come to work?**

Yes. Unless you are directed not to, you must still report to work as regularly scheduled. If you are assigned to work in a situation that would put you at greater risk of exposure than in your normal day to day activities, your department will determine the appropriate protective measures, such as protective equipment, social distancing plans, and increased hygiene measures.

**I have concerns about coming into work because of possible exposure to the virus. What are my options?**

If you believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19, please follow CDC and MN Dept. of Health guidelines, which can be found online at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us). Links can also be found on the Faribault County website.

If you believe you will need to self-quarantine, fill out the FFCRA Request Form on the Faribault County website under Central Services/Human Resources, COVID-19 Information for Employees, then click the form.

You may also discuss your concerns with Central Services or review information below regarding pay, time off, leave eligibility, and Employee Assistance Plan. EAP contact information: 1-800-550-6248 or online at [SandCreekEAP.com](http://SandCreekEAP.com)

**What if I choose to self-quarantine without having a direct exposure risk?**

To fulfill service to the public, all able employees are expected to report to work and perform duties, unless directed otherwise. If the employee feels it is in their best interest to self-quarantine, employees will need to follow the process to request a leave of absence, following all policies and procedures within their department, the personnel policies or collective bargaining agreements to request PTO, comp time or an unpaid leave of absence. Unauthorized absences may result in an unpaid leave and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Does my employer or supervisor have the authority to send ill employees' home?**

As always, supervisors and department heads have the authority to require an ill employee to leave the workplace, as a safety consideration for the health of other employees. While supervisors and department heads should not make judgments about a medical diagnosis, they may rely on symptoms to decide to send an employee home. *(Coronavirus symptoms are respiratory in nature and may include fever, cough and shortness of breath.)*

### **What if a County employee is returning from travel out of the state?**

If an employee has plans to travel out-of-state, the employee should use caution when traveling to areas that are current “hot-spots” with growing numbers of active COVID-19 cases.

When an employee travels out-of-state, the employee should notify their supervisor or department head at the employee’s earliest convenience to allow for sufficient planning time. Employees, supervisors, and department heads are encouraged to work together to create a return-to-work plan.

After returning from out-of-state travel, it is recommended employees work from home for 7 days if telecommuting is available and possible within their respective department. If telecommuting is not an option or is only available for less than the recommended 7 days, employees will be required to return to their normal job duties while following these guidelines for 14 days following their return from travel:

- Wear a mask inside all county facilities and while working outside where social distancing is not attainable.
- Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms defined by CDC. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>)
  - If an employee exhibits any of the CDC defined symptoms, the employee is to leave work immediately and contact their supervisor or department head for further instruction.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all personal work areas, electronics, and equipment.

## **Pay, Time Off, & Leave Eligibility**

### **How will I be paid if I must be away from work?**

The options below are available to employees if:

- An employee is sent home from work due to illness,
- An employee is sent home even though they believe they are well enough to work,
- An employee is subject to quarantine, or
- An employee needs to care for a child due to school or daycare closure related to COVID-19.

Employees have several options available:

- May use applicable PTO, comp, or sick leave bank benefits available to them.
- If in their probationary period may utilize their accrued PTO for COVID-19 related absences.
- May discuss alternative work arrangements available to them with their supervisor or department head. The use and approval of telework is at the sole discretion of the department head and Central Services Director. Not all work situations are appropriate for telework, nor is telework appropriate for all employees.
- If all PTO, comp, and sick leave bank options are exhausted, staff may choose to utilize **borrowing PTO, at maximum, an amount equal to their normal, non-overtime hours, in a pay period.** These borrowed hours can only be used in conjunction with time off related to COVID-19. Please contact the Central Services Director for more information.
- Staff may choose to be **absent without pay** if all paid time off, comp, and sick leave bank options are exhausted.

**Can I telework?**

At this point in time, if your department has the resources for employees to telework, employees can do so with prior approval of the department head, County Aud./Treas./Coord., and Central Services Director. If your department has limited laptops available for telework, it will be up to the department head to determine which employees will be allowed to telework based on essential duties and tasks they feel are necessary to be completed. Employees will be required to document their time worked while teleworking.

**What are my leave options if I get sick with COVID-19 or I must care for my family member who is sick with COVID-19?**

Unless directed otherwise by a health care provider or the Minnesota Department of Health, employees who are well should report to work. If their job responsibilities can be performed through telework, they may telework if arranged with their department head.

If an employee is not well enough to report to work, but is well enough to work from home, if their job responsibilities can be performed through telework, they may telework if arranged with their department head and prior approval has been granted.

If an employee is ill or is caring for a family member who is ill, they may use PTO or comp time.

Questions? Please contact Central Services.

**What if I must be out of work due to a quarantined or sick state for either myself or my immediate family members?**

See section: **Pay, Time Off, & Leave Eligibility.**

If an employee is ill with COVID-19 or caring for a family member who is ill with COVID-19 and has exhausted all of their accruals, the employee can during the public health emergency request the equivalent of up to normal (non-overtime) work hours in a single pay period to be advanced to them if they meet the criteria stated in the attached form.

**What if my child's school or day care is closed due to illnesses? I have no other childcare arrangements.**

See section: **Pay, Time Off, & Leave Eligibility.**

**Employee Assistance Program****What assistance is available to help me cope with the emotional impact of the situation?**

Faribault County provides resources to help all employees and eligible dependents cope with these types of life events through its Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP provides confidential, short-term counseling at no cost to the employee.

**Employee Assistance Program – EAP**

**Phone: 1-800-550-6248**

**Website: [SandCreekEAP.com](http://SandCreekEAP.com)**