



**HUMAN RESOURCES
& DEVELOPMENT**
TULARE COUNTY
Equal Opportunity Employer

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 23, 2020

TO: Department Heads; HR Advisory; Payroll Staff

FROM: Rhonda Sjostrom, Human Resources Director

RE: CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Purpose of Document:

This document is intended to provide clarity about employee policies, practices and procedures that may be impacted in response to COVID-19 and its potential impact to operations. The document will continue to evolve as we receive additional questions and as information progresses. Information is subject to change and the below guidelines are intended to be temporary as a safety precaution to COVID-19.

Commitment to Health and Safety:

The safety of our community and our workforce is of utmost importance. For up-to-date information on COVID-19, and guidance from Public Health please go to the [COVID-19 \(Novel Coronavirus\) webpage](#).

Q1. How can I protect myself in the workplace to limit my risk of getting sick?

A. Wash your hands frequently 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.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using regular household cleaning spray or wipes.

Q2. Can I wear a mask to work?

A. Currently, there is no recommendation to wear masks. However, if you choose to wear a face mask, it is important to understand that face masks are not a substitute for hand washing which is the priority. Good hand washing techniques are the most effective ways to prevent yourself from getting sick. You will be notified by your supervisor and provided with a suitable mask, and or gloves, should your position require such protective gear.

Q3. What should I do if I have an interaction with a coworker who appears to be sick with flu like symptoms?

A. Confidentially inform your supervisor/manager and/or Human Resources staff of your concerns. Also, follow the CDC prevention guidelines listed in Q1. As a supervisor/manager, please encourage staff to use personal sick leave if they are ill.

Q4. Is it OK to have a County doctor or nurse screen me for Coronavirus?

A. Only your personal physician can examine you. If you are enrolled in the County insurance plan, you may also utilize the County's plan through 98point6 for on-

demand, text based primary care. There is no copay charged for utilizing 98point6. Find out more about the County's 98point6 plan by going to [98point6 – FAQ](#).

If you are enrolled in the County's Anthem Blue Cross plan, you may also have access to LiveHealth Online. You may be charged your regular copay through LiveHealth Online. Find out more about LiveHealth Online by going to [Mobile App LiveHealth Online](#).

Q5. Can I stay home from work because I'm worried about getting sick?

A. Employees are still required to report to work, until further notice. Employees can request to utilize their leave accruals and after determining operational needs, your department may approve.

Q6. My physician recommends that I be quarantined, how will I be paid during my absence from work?

A. Contact your supervisor to let them know you will be absent from work. If you feel well enough to work, your supervisor may consider whether teleworking is an option. If teleworking is not an option, you may use any available leave balances to be paid during this time. If you run out of leave balances and still need to be off work, contact your supervisor via email or phone to request an advancement of sick leave. Please be advised that consistent with the Governor's emergency proclamation, waiting times for State Disability Insurance (SDI) and Paid Family Leave (PFL) have been waived and may be available to you during this time.

Q7. When will a doctor's note be required?

A. To decrease the strain on the healthcare systems, doctor's notes will not be immediately required. Your Department Manager, with the assistance of the Human Resources & Development Department, will determine on a case-by-case basis when a doctor's note may be needed.

Q8. I feel sick with flu like symptoms and I called my doctor who told me I should stay home. How will I be paid?

A. You may use your available sick or other leave balances. If you feel well enough to work, your supervisor/department may determine if telework is an available option. If you are not able to telework, you may use your paid leave accruals. If you exhaust your paid leave accruals, contact your supervisor via email or phone to request an advancement of sick leave.

Q9. A member of my family is sick so I can't come to work. Can I use sick leave?

A. Yes, a family member is defined as husband, wife, domestic partner, child, stepchild, grandchild, brother, stepbrother, sister, stepsister, parent, guardian, stepparent, foster parent, grandparent, or any person serving as a parent, or who has served as a parent, or any other person living in the same household as the employee. Your supervisor/department will let you know if teleworking is an option. If you are not able to telework, you may use your vacation, compensatory time or sick leave.

Q10. My child's school or daycare is closed due to health concerns and I need to stay home to care for my child. How will I be paid?

A. Your supervisor/department will let you know if teleworking is an option. If you are not able to telework, you may use your vacation, compensatory time or sick leave if you are not available to work.

Q11. What should I do if I have plans to travel internationally or I am currently traveling internationally?

A. In accordance with CDC guidance, we are requiring employees to notify their supervisors if they are planning travel or are currently traveling to countries with widespread, ongoing transmission of COVID-19 as listed on the [CDC website](#). Individuals who have travelled to any Level 3 areas will be asked to stay home for 14 days upon arrival back to their residence. Your supervisor/department will let you know if teleworking is an option. If you are not able to telework, you may use your accrued leave. If you do not have leave balances or expect to exhaust your leave balances prior to the self-isolation period, please contact your supervisor via email or phone regarding advanced leave pay (ALP).

Q12. I am over the age of 65, have a compromised immune system, or a chronic health condition which makes me vulnerable to the virus, what can I do?

- A. **Employees wanting to work** who do not display symptoms associated with the virus will be allowed to work, as long as they can continue to follow the current published guidelines of the CDC, including social distancing, avoiding confined meetings and washing of hands.

Telework or Work from Home may be considered for employees whose job duties are conducive to work from home. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, there are some positions at the County that require the employee to be physically present in the workplace. These arrangements are expected to be short term, and the County will continue to monitor guidance from health officials and the need for remote work arrangements. Employees should not assume any specified period of time for working remotely and the County may require employees to return to regular, in-office work at any time.

Employees Unable to Work from Home may be able to work flexible schedules or may be permitted to use available leave balances of all types (sick, vacation, compensatory time off, and personal holiday) if their position is not conducive to working from home. In addition, SDI may be used to provide full or partial wage loss during this time and PFL may be used for partial wage loss to care of ill or quarantined family members.

Q13. What extra steps is the County doing for cleaning public spaces in our buildings?

- A. It is a priority that County facilities are maintained at the highest standard of cleanliness. The General Services Agency has directed the custodial service providers following the guidelines issued by Tulare County's Public Health Office on February 27, 2020. This includes frequent cleaning of commonly touched surfaces such as doorknobs, handles, handrails, faucet handles, etc. Restrooms are stocked with sufficient antibacterial soap and paper towels for proper handwashing.

Q14. What should staff do to keep their immediate spaces as clean as possible?

- A. Staff are encouraged to continue their daily cleaning and disinfecting routine of personal desks. Custodial staff are not cleaning the tops of personal desks to ensure documents, personal equipment and appliances are not disturbed. Disinfectant wipes are being provided to each department through General Services. Staff should contact their supervisor regarding cleaning supplies available for them to use in their workspace. Staff are discouraged from using other staff's phones, desks, offices, tools and equipment when possible.

Q15: Governor Newsom issued an Executive Order on March 19, 2020 requiring Californians to stay at home. Do I still have to come to work?

- A. Staff identified as "**Essential Workers**" may be assigned to work at home when possible, but may still be required to physically work either at their regular County location or another location if needed. Those who are physically working at a County location should still follow the guidelines noted above. Essential Workers who become sick, or have to care for a sick family member, can be substituted immediately by Reserve Disaster Services Workers. Essential Workers who need to be substituted due to illness, or to care for a sick family member, must use their sick leave, or other available accruals.

Staff identified as "**Reserve Disaster Services Workers**" and "**Non-Essential Workers**" will be staying at home, but will remain on standby to work if needed. They may be required to check-in daily by calling their supervisor or another person designated by their Department indicating either they are (1) available for work or (2) unavailable/sick.

Q16: What is the difference between “Essential Workers,” “Reserve Disaster Services Workers” and “Non-Essential Reserve Workers”?

Essential Workers and Reserve Disaster Services Workers will rotate, as needed, to prevent illness and burnout, and to be able to address their families’ needs. Departments will determine their specific schedule, i.e. which employees will be Essential Workers working during specific week(s) and which employees will be Reserve Disaster Services Workers staying at home during that same time period. However, Departments will remain flexible if these employees become sick, or have to care for a family member who is sick. At this time, Non-Essential Workers will not be scheduled to work on a rotating basis, but they are expected to remain available, ready to work, and required to check-in daily as explained above.

Q17: How will “Essential Workers,” “Reserve Disaster Services Workers,” and “Non-Essential Workers” be paid?

Essential Workers will receive their regular pay when they are working, whether at home or at a specified County location. Reserve Disaster Services Workers and Non-Essential Workers will receive their regular pay if they indicate they are available if they are needed to work. Reserve Disaster Services Workers and Non-Essential Workers who indicate they are unavailable, sick, or have pre-scheduled vacation or sick leave, will use their leave accrual(s) on those date(s).

Q18: How does this impact employees who are scheduled to take pre-approved vacation or sick leave?

Essential Workers, Reserve Disaster Services Workers, and Non-Essential Workers who have an upcoming vacation that has already been approved will use their vacation accrual(s) on those date(s). Similarly, these employees can also use their sick leave for a planned surgery, treatment, etc.