

The Wisconsin State Government continues to apply COVID-19-related workplace policies in terms of the number of employees at the work site, social distancing requirements, personal protective equipment, cleaning standards, travel restrictions, etc. The information below summarizes policies and guidance currently in effect. The information is based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, and other sources as of the date published.

Telecommuting

The state recognizes the COVID-19 pandemic is having a considerable impact on our employees and their families. As such, telecommuting is required where feasible and appropriate based on an agency's unique needs. Supervisors are also strongly encouraged to provide flexibility for employees' work schedules and/or support other accommodations to the maximum extent possible. Because the duration of the pandemic remains uncertain, these expectations regarding telecommuting will be in place through at least April 2, 2021.

An employee who is scheduled to return to the workplace but believes their health or other circumstance does not yet permit their return, should discuss this with their supervisor and may request a reasonable accommodation, if appropriate, following the normal process.

Headquartering. A headquarter location denotes an employee's official work location. Employees who are permitted to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic are doing so under a short-term or temporary authorization meaning there is no change to headquarter location. Under normal circumstances, short-term and temporary authorizations are limited to six months. However, under the circumstances of the current state-wide pandemic, authorization to work from home is considered temporary until the State declares a return to normal operations.

Commuting. While an employee is formally headquartered at their normal work location, any commute from the employee's home to the office is not reimbursable. (See Compensation Plan, Section F 3.05(3)(a) 6.). If an employee is temporarily commuting from their home to a location that is different than the headquartered office, the guidance in Section F of the Compensation Plan should be followed to determine mileage when traveling for work.

Employees with Caregiving Responsibilities. Agencies are encouraged to establish flexible work schedules (FWS) to facilitate the performance of work despite caregiving responsibilities. An FWS consists of workdays with core hours and flexible hours. Core hours are designated hours when employees must be present for work (including telework). Flexible hours are the part of the workday when employees may (within limits) choose their start and stop times and break periods (i.e., work starting and stopping times).

Equipment Use and Request. Employees should be permitted to take home a computer (laptop preferred but desktop permitted for necessity), monitor(s), keyboard, mouse, headset, office supplies, and cellphone, if requested. Agencies are encouraged to expand their digital capabilities to diminish the need for printers and copying. It is recommended that printer and copiers remain in state facilities. Any equipment sent home with the employee should have been inventoried to include asset tags and serial numbers where available.

If an individual requests additional office equipment for working from home, the request should not be approved unless the item is:

- Easily moved, and
- There is no or limited risk in transporting or using the equipment outside of its normal facility.
 - For example: A sit/stand station requires a stable, solid surface and has considerable bulk and weight. The state is unable to readily assess the installation at an individual's home, thus the risk of injury outweighs the request to use at home. This request should not be approved.

Should an individual require large equipment to complete day-to-day tasks, as described above, but the risk management issues associated with larger objects cannot be mitigated, the most effective resolution is likely for the employee to work from their normal assigned work location. The assigned work location has already been configured to address the employee's unique circumstance.

Home Office and Internet Costs. In temporary telecommuting situations, agencies are not required to provide a full home office or internet connection. That said, during the COVID-19 pandemic, agencies will continue to work with employees to ensure they have sufficient tools to complete their work activities from home. Employees who are unable or unwilling to do so within these parameters can and should return to their regular workplace.

When the employer approves a permanent telecommuting arrangement for an employee, costs associated with a telecommuting request, including the installation of necessary equipment, should be reviewed as part of the approval process. It is strongly recommended that the agency and employee should have a clear understanding of who is responsible for these costs.

DPM has published an updated teleworking policy and template if needed. Please see DPM's website.

Please note the above guidance may differ for 24/7 operations including correctional settings or health care settings.

SOCIAL DISTANCING/PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Social distancing, of six feet apart, is required. In person meetings, trainings, and conferences (except those activities related to public health/public safety/national security) are prohibited until further notice. Coworkers working in the same building should not share food.

Agencies should, to the greatest extent feasible, offer citizen services online or virtually.

Shift Changes. Shift changes must be managed thoughtfully to reduce infection risk and to ensure optimal disinfection of the worksite. Agencies are encouraged to designate specific entrances/exits for employees to use.

Shift Staggering. Where operationally feasible, worksites should implement staggered shifts (including break and meal periods). Supervisors should work with their HR representative to determine if a staggered schedule can be accommodated and how to assign employees to different schedules. Supervisors should consult with employees to determine if there are concerns with carpools, mass transit, or other factors that may impact their work schedule. If employee start and end times are already staggered, the supervisor should review the schedule to ensure adequate separation exists to avoid groups of employees waiting in a particular area. Examples of shift staggering work times:

- Group 1 – 7:00 to 7:15 a.m.
- Group 2 – 7:30 to 7:45 a.m.
- Group 3 – 8:00 to 8:15 a.m.

End of shift times should be scheduled to release the employees in the order they arrived.

Personal Protective Equipment. Employees are required to properly wear face masks while in state facilities or when in enclosed buildings while on state business. This direction is applicable to all state facilities throughout the state of Wisconsin regardless of physical distance between employees or the number of people present. This includes while waiting to enter a facility, cubicles, offices, conference rooms, elevators, stairwells, kitchenettes, bathrooms, hallways, and corridors.

- Employees who are unable to wear masks due to medical or mental health conditions or disability should notify their supervisor or human resources representative for assistance in requesting an accommodation. Additionally, human resources may exclude certain position from the indoor mask requirement if the mask would create a health or safety risk due to the duties of the position.

- Agencies will have a supply of appropriate face masks available for employees and members of the public doing business with the state. Employees are also permitted to wear their own clean, work appropriate face masks.
- Masks may be removed when eating, drinking, communicating with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing and communication cannot be achieved through other means, to confirm identity if requested, or if in an enclosed space where no other person is present.

BUILDING ACCESS AND SERVICES

Many services provided by the State are being performed remotely or with less public interaction than normally occurs. All buildings remain open to state employees but the number of staff in locations should be limited if operationally feasible. Employees are expected to stay home if ill and will be expected to follow proper handwashing, cough-covering, and hygiene to prevent spread of viruses. In addition, the Division of Facilities Development and Management (DFDM) will ensure enhanced cleaning in DOA managed and leased facilities. See DFDM guidance for more details.

MANAGING SICK EMPLOYEES (SYMPTOM SCREENING AND TEMPERATURE CHECKS)

Employees may be subject to temperature checks or other testing at authorized locations such as correctional and healthcare settings. Currently temperature checks and health screenings have been authorized only at DOC, DHS, DMA, and DVA facilities. Employees who are or appear ill will be sent home from work by supervisors. Supervisors may make inquiry regarding employee health and test results.

Symptom Screening. Supervisors and/or HR staff can send employees home who exhibit Covid-19 or [flu-like symptoms](#) or otherwise appear sick and unable to perform their duties.

- Supervisors may ask employees who report feeling ill at work if they are experiencing Covid-19 or [flu-like symptoms](#).
- If the employee is not able to immediately leave the workplace due to transportation issues, the employee should be isolated in a non-public area. Alternative transportation should be encouraged if the employee uses public transportation to get to work.
- If after discussion regarding the necessity of protecting the employee's health and the health of the workforce, the employee refuses to leave work, the supervisor should direct the employee to leave. Human resources staff are available to consult with supervisors unsure about whether to send an employee home.
- If an employee calls in sick or is sent home from work with flu-like symptoms, the employee is considered unfit for duty and may not return to work until the applicable interval has passed. Employees will be required to use the appropriate leave category. Employees with no available sick leave or alternate leave will be placed on approved leave without pay for the duration of their illness.
- Consistent with CDC and DHS DPH recommendations, normal agency requirements to provide a doctor's note to justify an extended absence have been temporarily suspended for an employee's absence due to flu-like (COVID-19) symptoms, *unless* the employee is currently required to provide medical verification for all absences. If there is concern about the truth of the employee's statements related to their need for the leave, the supervisor should consult with their HR representative to assist in obtaining further documentation. Before returning to work, employees need to contact their supervisor to provide an update on their status.

Temperature Checks. Except where explicitly authorized (e.g. at DOC, DHS, DMA, and DVA facilities) and in accordance with the approved procedures, supervisors and/or HR staff should never take an employee's temperature or attempt to do any medical evaluation of an employee. The exception to this direction is for agencies with authorized (based on operational needs and approval of DHS) temperature checking procedures. DPM will provide additional details related to implementation and management in these cases.

Managing Employees Positive for or Exposed to COVID-19 – based on updated CDC and DHS DPH Guidance.

- **Employees who test positive (with or without symptoms)**
 - A positive employee with symptoms will stay home until the following is met based on the employee's health care provider at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours have passed with no fever without fever-reducing medication AND symptoms have improved.
 - A positive employee with no symptoms can return to work, based on the direction of the employee's health care provider once 10 days have passed since the positive test.
 - Additional information on the timing of close contact with an individual who tested positive can be found on [CDC Public Health Recommendations](#).
- **Employees who have been exposed to COVID-19**
 - Employees who have had close contact with someone positive for COVID-19 will quarantine* at home for 14 days. Close contact means:
 - Employee was within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes within a 24 hour period.
 - Employee provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
 - Employee had direct physical contact with the person (touched or hugged them)
 - Employee shared eating or drinking utensils when COVID positive person sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on employee
- **Employees will stay home for 14 days* after last contact with person who has COVID-19 and do the following:**
 - Watch for fever (100.4°F), cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19
 - If possible, stay away from others within your home, especially people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19
 - Get tested for COVID-19. If the test is negative, continue your quarantine period for 14 days and if you develop symptoms after your test, get tested again.

*NOTE: If an employee was in contact, but **not close contact** with someone who is positive (e.g. low risk), they do not need to take preventive measures, e.g. quarantine for 14 days; however, employees should closely monitor for symptoms for 14 days and immediately isolate and get a test if any symptoms develop.*

**[CDC's critical infrastructure guidance](#) provides exceptions to current home quarantine practices after an exposure to COVID-19 for some workers. The guidance advises that employers may permit workers who have had an exposure to COVID-19, but who do not have symptoms, to continue to work, provided they adhere to additional safety precautions, such as measuring the employee's temperature and assessing for symptoms of COVID-19 before each work shift ("pre-screening"), asking the employee to self-monitor for symptoms during their work shift, and wearing a [cloth face covering](#). Per DHS guidance, this exception should only be used when exclusion from work would result in an imminent threat to patient care, public health or public safety. See [Health Alert #16: Quarantine of Wisconsin Residents Exposed to COVID-19 is an Essential Prevention Strategy](#).*

- **Notification Requirements**
 - An employee who is working in a state facility and tests positive for COVID-19 or is a close contact of an individual positive for COVID-19 should notify their supervisor or HR.
 - If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, the agency HR Director will notify employees who were in close contact with the ill employee to inform them of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. Confidentiality will be maintained as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
 - Due to the current spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin, a notice to the entire worksite is not necessary. Additional information on the [DHS COVID-19 resources for employers](#) should be referred to for additional information about how to assess risk and steps to maintain operations when an employee is positive.
 - HR or the supervisor will also contact facilities management to initiate cleaning of the COVID-19 positive employee's work station following more stringent [environmental cleaning and disinfection protocols](#).

TRAVEL

Travel is limited to essential travel but may occur anywhere in the United States. Please note: The current non-pandemic related work travel ban continues to be in place.

Employees traveling for business should ride alone in vehicles where operationally feasible. Employees who normally have multiple employees in the vehicle due to safety or work standards should follow their agency-specific protocols when traveling. If more than one person is in the vehicle, all occupants must wear masks. Upon arrival at the worksite and prior to departing, employees should wash their hands as recommended. Employees working in an essential business function who travel for work do not need to quarantine as a result of their travel.