

**2019 Novel Coronavirus Guidance**  
**Frequently Asked Questions for State of Idaho Employees**  
Updated: March 22, 2020

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**1. GENERAL COVID-19 QUESTIONS**

**What is novel coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some of which cause illness in people and some that are found in animals that can spread to humans. The novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 has not been seen in people before, so it is called new (novel). There are other known human coronaviruses that cause mild respiratory illnesses like the common cold, which more frequently occur in fall and winter.

Coronaviruses are thought to spread from person to person, like other respiratory viruses such as through coughing, sneezing or talking. They might also be spread by touching a contaminated surface then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updates its website, [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus), daily with the latest information. The [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int) is also a trusted source of information about COVID-19. For information on COVID-19 in Idaho, see Idaho's novel coronavirus page, [coronavirus.idaho.gov](https://coronavirus.idaho.gov).

**UPDATED Where can I go for up-to-date information about coronavirus/COVID-19 in Idaho?**

Visit [coronavirus.idaho.gov](https://coronavirus.idaho.gov) for updates, resources, and guidance for Idaho. For most current workforce guidance, visit <https://dhr.idaho.gov/covid-19-workforce-guidance/>

**What can I do to protect myself?**

The CDC recommends the following [everyday preventive actions](#) to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with the crook of your elbow or a tissue; then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaner spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the restroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. (For information about handwashing, see [CDC's Handwashing website](#). For information specific to healthcare, see [CDC's Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](#).)
- If traveling, follow the [CDC's guidance for travelers](#).

### **NEW** What can I do to protect my co-workers if I may have been exposed?

You should discuss your potential exposure with your supervisor (do not disclose medical information) and/or HR representative to determine options available to you. Also, visit: <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/127/2020/03/Interim-Guidance-for-Isolation-for-COVID-19.pdf> for guidance on self-isolation.

### **UPDATED** I am having flu-like symptoms. What should I do?

You should stay home when you are sick to help prevent the spread of illness to others. You should restrict all activities outside your home, except for getting medical care.

If you need to seek medical care, call your healthcare provider and tell them your symptoms before you go. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

If an employee feels they do not need to be seen in-person by their doctor for an illness or concern, they can use **telehealth** as an option. Visit [ogi.idaho.gov](http://ogi.idaho.gov) to learn more about telehealth benefits. Using telehealth, when appropriate for your concern, can reduce your exposure to others, decrease wait times, and provide access to an additional number of healthcare providers.

All state employees enrolled in the state's medical plan have access to telehealth through MD Live, as well as enrolled family members. Visit [ogi.idaho.gov](http://ogi.idaho.gov) to learn more about your telehealth options.

### **Can I wear a facemask at work to help prevent infection from coronavirus?**

The [CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask](#) to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

Per their website, facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for healthcare workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

### **Will my agency provide hand sanitizer, tissues, and cleaning supplies for the office?**

Agencies may purchase hand sanitizer, tissues, and other cleaning supplies, such as disinfecting wipes, as needed.

**UPDATED What kinds of environmental precautions should employees take for conference rooms and shared equipment?**

The CDC states that it may be possible for a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

The CDC recommends following [everyday preventive actions](#) to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases which includes cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaner or disinfecting wipes. Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use disposable wipes to wipe down commonly used surfaces before each use (conference room tables, shared keyboards, remote controls, etc.).

**NEW Does DHR have any guidance on starting new hires during this health crisis? Should they be allowed to start? What will training look like? What if agencies are shut down?**

Agencies should evaluate this in accordance with their current staffing levels, workload demands, ability to onboard a new employee, Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), etc. If further assistance is needed, consult with DHR, DFM and/or the Governor's Office.

## **2. TELECOMMUTING**

**UPDATED What are my telecommuting options if I would like to work from home?**

You should discuss this with your supervisor. Examples of information your supervisor may take into consideration is outlined in the [Statewide COVID-19 Policy](#) on the DHR website.

Telecommuting should be utilized wherever possible in lieu of taking leave related to COVID-19 and coded on the employee time sheet as CVR (including FLSA exempt employees). However, all hours must be coded based on actual work performed. If there is not enough work that can be performed in a telecommuting capacity, you may not be able to telecommute for all your regularly scheduled hours.

Unfortunately, not all positions and/or individuals are candidates for telecommuting. If you or your position are not a candidate for telecommuting, you should review other options with your supervisor or HR representative, such as taking leave and/or implementing social distances measures. Employees with medical conditions may also qualify for time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or an accommodation under the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA).

All telecommuting arrangements are temporary and subject to change as the COVID-19 situation develops. Click [here](#) for *Temporary Telecommuting Agreement*.

**NEW Am I required to work from home?**

Telecommuting may be a requirement for some employees based on their department/agency's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and/or in response to the COVID-19 situation. However, agencies should work with employees to allow them to work in a capacity that is most effective while also ensuring the health and safety of other employees.

**NEW Is an agency required to allow employees to telecommute?**

Agencies are not required to allow employees to telecommute; however, agencies are encouraged to do so instances where the agency is able to maintain essential operations, manage the employee remotely, and ensure adherence to applicable laws.

**NEW Can I work from home while caring for children or others?**

General restrictions related to caring for young children or other persons while telecommuting during the COVID-19 situation have been waived. Under this exception, a telecommuting employee would be expected to account for work and non-work hours and take appropriate leave (paid or unpaid) to account for time spent away from normal work-related duties (e.g., to care for children or sick family members).

**NEW What if I am eligible to telecommute but I do not have the tools needed to do so remotely?**

Your department/agency is not responsible to provide personal equipment, such as internet, to allow you to telecommute. However, your agency may be able to provide you with state equipment (such as a laptop, cell phone/reimbursement, VPN access, etc. ) needed to perform your essential duties at home, if what is needed is regarded as reasonable by your supervisor. If internet access is not possible based on where you live, and you must access the internet in order to perform your essential duties, you may not be authorized to telecommute.

**NEW Who is not eligible to telecommute?**

This is identified on a case-by-case basis. Refer to the [Statewide COVID-19 Policy](#) for information on what may be considered.

**NEW What are my options if I am not eligible to telecommute?**

Employees whose job duties prevent them from telecommuting, may use accrued leave if they are unable to report to their worksite due to prolonged school closures or other disruptions that may result from COVID-19.

**NEW What happens if my worksite closes and I am not eligible/authorized to telecommute?**

DHR is working with the Governor's Office and DFM to evaluate options should this occur.

### **3. LEAVE**

**NEW What options are available for State employees who may need to be absent from work as a result of COVID-19 such as illness, self-isolation, or care for a family member?**

Options may include: telecommuting, accrued leave, advanced sick leave, paid administrative leave for COVID-19, leave donations, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) and unpaid leave.

For information to leave options reference the following:

- [Statewide COVID-19 Policy](#)
- [Temporary Telecommuting Agreement](#)
- [Sick Leave Policy](#)
- [Vacation Leave Policy](#)
- [Leave Donation Policy](#)
- [Statewide FMLA Policy](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

**NEW Can you provide an example of when an agency would apply paid administrative leave related to COVID-19 (CVT) for employees?**

The use of paid administrative leave related to COVID-19 (leave code: CVT) applies when an employee has exhausted ALL of their accrued leave balances and requires leave in accordance with the provisions outlined in the [Statewide COVID-19 Policy](#). The use of CVT only applies to COVID-19 and is not for employees who have exhausted all of their paid leave and require time off for reasons unrelated to COVID-19.

**NEW Are there any instances when an employee would not be required to exhaust all of their leave balances to use paid administrative leave related to COVID-19 (CVT)?**

If the Governor or their designee declares a Department facility closed, employees may be eligible to received paid administrative leave. Employees will be notified if this occurs. Refer to the [Statewide COVID-19 Policy](#) and [DHR Rule 250.08](#).

Agencies may also authorize up to 80 hours of paid administrative leave for employees who are not allowed to work due to infection control procedures set by a public health official or regulatory entity (i.e., HHS, CMS, etc.) AND are unable to work in a different capacity within their agency and/or telecommute (employees do not need to exhaust leave balances in this situation). Note: An example is long term care facilities under the purview of the Center for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS) standards which require that employees have their temperatures taken prior to working their shift. If an employee is unable to meet these standards, then they are sent home and not allowed to work. The employee may feel fine enough to work but due to these standards, we will not allow them to. Such standards generally exist in healthcare and residential living.

**NEW What kind of documentation is required for paid administrative leave related to COVID-19 (CVT)?**

The following are examples of acceptable documentation:

- School Closures: Information that is publicly available is sufficient (press release, information on the school's website, etc.).

- Daycare Closures: Since daycares do not always close when the schools close, employees should provide a copy of the notice they received from their daycare stating the closure.
- Required Self-Isolation by a Public Health Official: Notification from the health department, local health district or the employee's medical provider.

If an employee is unable to obtain documentation and/or obtain documentation in a reasonable timeframe, consult with your legal counsel or DHR to determine appropriate actions.

**NEW Will the leave accrual maximums be waived for employees in position with current high need?**

We are continuing to evaluate methods to compensate employees who are essential to the ongoing operations of agencies and who are critically involved in the COVID-19 response. At this time, we have not made any changes to the maximum accrual limits. However, we will notify agencies if changes are made.

**NEW Am I entitled to use Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) for COVID-19?**

You may be entitled to use FMLA for absence related to COVID-19 if you have a qualifying event as defined by the Family and Medical Leave Act. Contact your HR representative or DHR for specific questions related to FMLA eligibility.

**UPDATED Will I be covered under workers' compensation if I contract COVID-19 from a co-worker?**

Anytime you believe you have acquired an illness at work, either you or your supervisor should complete and submit the [First Report of Injury](#). The State Insurance Fund will review your claim and determine whether workers' compensation applies.

**NEW Can an employee request donated leave?**

Yes, an employee may request donated leave accordance to the [Leave Donation Policy](#).

**NEW Many employees are working remotely. How do they sign the leave donation form?**

During COVID-19, the Division of Statewide Payroll (DSP) is allowing employees to submit their leave donation form without a signature. In lieu of a sign form, employees must complete the leave donation form and submit it using their State of Idaho e-mail address in order to validate the request. This requirement is designed to ensure the integrity of the donation process. If DSP has any concerns regarding the submission, DSP may contact the donating appointing authority or donating employee in order to ensure authenticity. If you have any further questions, please contact the DSP Helpdesk for additional guidance.

For submission deadlines, please refer to the Biweekly IPOPS Actions Requiring Agency Approval Calendar located in the DSP Payroll and Personnel Guide:

<https://www.sco.idaho.gov/LivePages/calendar%20year%202020.aspx>

**NEW Are there any considerations being made to allow employees to donate sick leave rather than just vacation leave?**

DHR is working with the Division of Financial Management and the Governor's Office to explore options related to this. We will notify agencies of any changes.

**NEW When will the new COVID-19 specific time codes be available?**

HR and Payroll contacts have access within I-Time to the new Earning and Leave Codes: CVC, CVR, CVS, and CVT. In order to enable these new codes, I-Time CPOs will need to make these codes available in Time Code Maintenance in I-Time. The agency can decide if they want all employees to have access to these codes or if they want to limit access to just the I-Time CPOs. For assistance in I-Time application, please contact the DSP Help Desk. For questions on applicability of each time code, contact DHR.

#### **4. SOCIAL DISTANCING**

**UPDATED Can I request to work in a position with less interpersonal contact until the concerns with COVID-19 are resolved?**

If you have a qualifying health condition under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), consult with your agency's HR representative to review your options.

**NEW What if I don't have any symptoms but I am required to self-isolate under the direction of my local public health authorities?**

Consult with your supervisor and agency HR representative regarding your options. You may be able to telecommute, use accrued leave balances, advanced sick leave, or paid administrative leave.

**NEW What if I need to stay home to care for a family member who is required to self-isolate under the direction of local public health authorities?**

Consult with your supervisor and agency HR representative regarding your options. You may be able to telecommute, use accrued leave balances, advanced sick leave, or paid administrative leave.

**Am I required to help a customer or client who is showing signs of COVID-19 or another communicable disease?**

You should discuss your concerns with your supervisor as they may be able to provide additional equipment and/or social distancing measures to ensure you are safely performing your job duties.

Additional information is available through the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration [website](#). Employees with a qualifying disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act may also have additional options available to them.

In some circumstances, employees have a right to refuse to perform their work if they believe it is not safe to do so. Employees should discuss their concerns with their supervisor and/or HR representative.

**UPDATED What if a co-worker is showing signs of illness and is still coming to work?**

Employees should follow normal call-in procedures and stay home anytime they are sick to help prevent the spread of illness to others.

If you are concerned about a co-worker showing signs of illness and still coming to work, talk to your supervisor or HR representative. Nonetheless, employees need to be cautious to ensure that they are not violating their co-worker's rights, discriminating against them, and/or interfering with their privacy.

## 5. TRAVEL

### **UPDATED I went on a vacation and was isolated by public health officials for two weeks after my planned vacation. What should I do?**

Contact your supervisor and notify them of your status and anticipated return to work (if known) and discuss your telecommuting and/or leave options.

### **UPDATED Can I impose a self-isolation on myself after traveling abroad?**

Contact your supervisor and notify them of your status and anticipated return to work (if known) and discuss your telecommuting and/or leave options.

Employees who have travelled to one of the Level 2 or Level 3 countries as defined by the [CDC](#), or areas with community transmission, in the last 14 days and return asymptomatic, should stay at home and self-monitor for 14 days from date of return consistent with the CDC guidelines. If they are approved to telecommute by their agency, then they should be allowed to do so during the self-monitoring period. Those employees for whom telecommuting is not approved by their agency should discuss their leave options with their HR representative.

### **UPDATED I am scheduled to travel for work. Can I choose not to go due to COVID-19?**

Non-essential business travel should be limited. Essential travel is determined by Agency Directors, University Presidents, and Agency Heads. When determining what is essential travel review the [CDC's guidance for travel](#) and consider several factors including, but not limited to:

- Is the travel related to the Agency Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)?
- What is the destination?
- What is the mode of travel and does it involve movement through impacted areas described by the CDC?
- What is the mission, and does it take the person into a higher exposure situation (i.e. large conference)?
- Are there alternative methods that can still accomplish the mission (video conference, remote access, etc.)?

The State Board of Examiners guidance is to use the most cost-effective and efficient mode but allows for additional travel costs if it is for a valid business reason such as airline travel insurance. The State Department of Insurance has a current list of authorized travel insurance providers.

## 6. OFFICE CLOSURES

### **UPDATED** What if offices need to be closed due to a COVID-19 outbreak?

Agencies should keep in mind we work in public service and must remain available to serve Idahoans. If agencies do not have updated Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP), now is the time to update them. To ensure continuity of operations, consider the information listed in the [Statewide COVID-19 Policy](#).

If an agency is concerned that they are unable to continue operations and need to consider closing a facility, please consult with DHR, DFM and the Governor's Office.

An example office closure template is available on DHR's [website](#).

### **NEW** How should agencies communicate to their staff when an employee, who has worked in close proximity, is required to self-isolate and/or tests positive for COVID-19? Should all those employees be sent home to self-isolate?

Agencies should consult with their agency's HR representative and legal counsel on appropriately communicating with employees and determining the appropriate course of action. A sample communication template is available on DHR's [website](#).

### **NEW** What if there is a wide-spread COVID-19 outbreak in a State-operated facility like a State hospital, clinic, or correctional facility?

If this occurs, then the appropriate public health officials and state authorities would determine the appropriate course of action and notify affected employees.

Agencies should proactively protect the workforce by requiring the use of protective personal equipment to reduce the spread of disease, [referring to the CDC's guidance](#). Additionally, employees, visitors, and/or patients enter the facility to prevent introduction of infected individuals. Continuously monitor your hygiene practices to ensure healthy employees keep from becoming infected. These are options that may require specific agency and possibly work-unit input to address, and each scenario will be unique in terms of need, regulation, and regulatory authority. Agencies should ensure continuous consultation with public health officials, regulatory entities (such as HHS and CMS), and their legal counsel to protect our workforce.

### **Does my agency have a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)?**

All State of Idaho agencies must have a COOP. Consult with your supervisor to obtain further information on the plan.

### **How do I find out if the office I am assigned to work at is closed?**

Because we provide critical services to all Idaho citizens, we avoid closing offices whenever possible. However, in the rare event that an office is closed, the first place to check is your agency's website and with your supervisor.

## 7. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Where can I go for support related to my stress, anxiety, and fears related to the coronavirus?

The current coronavirus outbreak and constant media coverage can be anxiety-producing. While it is important to stay informed, there are things we can do to manage our mental well-being:

- Avoid speculation and get your information from reputable sources such as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the [World Health Organization](#), or the official [Idaho Coronavirus Website](#).
- Manage how you follow the outbreak in the media. If the news is causing you stress or anxiety, reduce your media intake and refer to the reputable information sources listed in the bullet point above.
- Talk about your fears, anxiety, and stress. The [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) provides confidential, short-term counseling services for benefit eligible employees and their dependents. Visit <https://ogi.idaho.gov/counseling/> or call 1-877-427-2327. (TDD: 1-800-697-0353).
- [GuidanceResources®](#) is Idaho's online EAP platform that provides access to timely, expert information on thousands of topics, including the coronavirus. Use ID: SOIEAP, and type "coronavirus" in the search bar.

### **UPDATED** Are there additional resources?

The [2-1-1 CareLine](#) is available to field coronavirus questions by dialing 2-1-1 or 1-800-926-2588 , or contact your [local public health district](#) with questions.

### **NEW** What kind of resources are available for overall well-being during this stressful time?

Health Matters has added a new section on their website dedicated to maintaining overall well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. You'll find resources, tips, and strategies to help you maintain your well-being during this challenging time at <https://healthmatters.idaho.gov/well-being-resources/>

## 8. Miscellaneous

### **NEW** Will DHR extend the due date for Cybersecurity Training?

The cybersecurity training deadline of March 31, 2020 will not be extended. There has been an increase threat of legitimate phishing attacks connected to COVID-19 and many employees will begin working from home, so it is critical that cyber-safety maintain a priority for all.

KnowBe4 offers short video vignettes (two minutes) to help remind users how to work safely from home. If your agency is interested in assigning this optional training module, please submit a request to [cybertraining@dhr.idaho.gov](mailto:cybertraining@dhr.idaho.gov).

### **NEW** How Will Employees Complete Respectful Workplace?

A recording is available for use. Agency's may request a copy of the recording and use it as a "Live Stream" option for the months of March and April 2020. Requests can be sent to [cybertraining@dhr.idaho.gov](mailto:cybertraining@dhr.idaho.gov).

**NEW Can the 1385-hour cap for temporary employees be waived or amended?**

DHR is working with the Division of Financial Management and the Governor's Office to explore options related to this. We will notify agencies of any changes.