CONTINUING OPERATIONS GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES

Office of Administration
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
UPDATED: JANUARY 10, 2022
Contents
Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1
Returning to the Worksite ........................................................................................................... 2
Staying Safe at Work—Personal Safety ..................................................................................... 2
  Wearing a Mask ......................................................................................................................... 2
  Gloves ....................................................................................................................................... 3
  Physical Distancing .................................................................................................................... 3
  Cleaning Personal Workspace .................................................................................................... 5
Worksite Safety ............................................................................................................................. 5
  Worksite Employee Screening Guidance .................................................................................. 5
  Worksite Exposure Protocol ...................................................................................................... 6
  Post-Worksite Exposure Cleaning and Disinfecting ................................................................. 9
Leave Policy ................................................................................................................................ 10
Travel Guidance .......................................................................................................................... 10
  Traveling on Mass Transit ......................................................................................................... 11
Frequently Asked Questions ....................................................................................................... 11
Resources .................................................................................................................................. 11
  Returning to Work Website ...................................................................................................... 11
  State Employee Assistance Program (SEAP) .............................................................................. 11

Introduction

On March 6, 2020, pursuant to Section 7301(c) of Pennsylvania’s Emergency Management Services Code, 35 Pa.C.S. § 7301(c), Governor Wolf issued a Proclamation of Disaster Emergency (“Proclamation”) related to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a national emergency in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The following guidance will be in place to support best public health practices to avoid negative impacts and adapt to the changing nature of the pandemic. This guidance will be in place for approved activities until further notice. It is important to follow these basic tenets:

Safety First: Follow all guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Health (DOH).

Personal Responsibility: We are all in this together, and everyone plays a role by following the CDC and DOH guidelines for handwashing and staying home if you are sick.
Employees of the LCB, Attorney General, PGCB, Auditor General and all other agencies not under the Governor's jurisdiction should contact their local HR office for assistance.

Please note the following guidance may differ for 24/7 operations including correctional facilities, state hospitals and centers, veterans’ homes, and youth development centers, as well as those agencies following CISA’s guidance for critical infrastructure workers. Employees within such operations should continue to follow the guidance issued by their agency.

In cases where a provision of an approved labor agreement or side letter cannot be reconciled with this policy, the labor agreement or side letter will control.

Returning to the Worksite

Some commonwealth employees are being asked to return to the worksite. It is now more important than ever for employees to do their part to prevent the spread of the virus by staying home when they are sick. The worksite may feel different upon your return and reflect what you are seeing in the commonwealth at large. There will be guidelines for voluntarily wearing masks and cleaning, as well as self-screening when coming into the worksite.

Before you report to work, be sure to do the following:

• Know that you will be required to:
  o Wash your hands frequently using these guidelines.
  o Keep your personal equipment and workstation clean.
• Please take time to review the Return to Work website for commonwealth employees.

Please direct any questions about returning to work to your supervisor.

Staying Safe at Work—Personal Safety

We all must do our part to protect our personal health and safety, as well as the health and safety of others, both at work and outside of work.

Wearing a Mask

Effective Monday, August 23, 2021 all employees and contracted staff working in agencies under the Governor’s jurisdiction will be required to wear a mask indoors, regardless of their vaccination status. Visitors should be encouraged to also wear masks, but will not be required.
Masks will be available at work locations, or you can wear your own, provided it meets CDC guidelines.

Masks may be removed under certain circumstances, including:
- When you are alone at a workstation. A workstation can be a cubicle with walls seven feet or higher, a personal office or when working alone and isolated from interaction with other people with little or no expectation of in-person interaction.
- When you are eating or drinking during breaks and lunch periods; however, at those times, physical distancing is encouraged.
- When it impedes vision, if you have a medical condition or if it would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.
- When driving alone.

Gloves

Gloves will only be provided to employees who require them to perform certain job functions, such as handling mail, custodial work, certain trades, and groundskeeping. Gloves are not recommended for general protective use for the following reasons:

- Touching your face with contaminated hands, whether gloved or not, poses a significant risk of infection.
- Gloves often create a false sense of security for the individuals wearing them; people are more likely to touch contaminated surfaces because they feel protected from the virus.
- When wearing gloves, people are less inclined to wash their hands, even though handwashing is the best defense against any virus.
- Proper removal of gloves takes training. If contaminated gloves are not removed properly, employees are exposed to greater risk.

Employees who use cleaning chemicals are required to use disposable gloves. Other personal protective equipment may also be required by the chemical manufacturer. Check chemical warning labels and safety data sheets for appropriate personal protective equipment. Disposable gloves are required to be worn when cleaning, including trash removal, after a known or suspected exposure to an individual with COVID-19. These items shall be disposed of immediately after cleaning.

Mail Handling

Employees who handle and process mail should attempt to complete processing activities in well-ventilated areas. They should avoid touching mouth, eyes, or face when handling mail. If employees choose to wear gloves while handling mail, gloves should be made of breathable material and should be changed when grossly dirty or when perforated. Gloves should be removed when not completing mail processing activities and frequent handwashing and sanitization is strongly encouraged.

Physical Distancing

As of May 31, 2021 physical distancing is no longer required at commonwealth worksites; however, it is still encouraged.
Physical Distancing in Meetings

Even though employees are returning to the worksite, Skype for Business or Microsoft Teams is still the preferred meeting platform. Avoid in-person gatherings whenever possible.

Employees should work with their IT staff to ensure that proper software and technology are available to accommodate physical distancing requirements. If an employee needs an accommodation, they should work with their supervisor to identify personal needs. Accommodations may include advance copies of documents, an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, computer-assisted real-time captioning (CART), extra time to review information, alternative virtual software platforms, etc.

Physical Distancing with Visitors

Some worksites or work requirements include interaction with the public in order to perform business functions. Your agency will determine when public facing operations will resume. Physical distancing with visitors is not required after May 31, 2021.

Other Infection Prevention Protocols

Employees should also use hand sanitizer, cleaning and disinfecting supplies, and tissues to prevent potential infection. For more information on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 please refer to Help Stop the Spread.

Take a moment and watch the video below for information on how to protect yourself from COVID-19.
Noncompliance with Personal Safety Guidelines

Employees who do not comply with the personal safety guidelines outlined herein will be subject to corrective action up to and including removal from employment.

Cleaning Personal Workspace

Frequently touched areas or personal workstations—including tables, desktops, light switches, phones and keyboards—should be cleaned daily.

The CDC recommends cleaning appropriate surfaces with soap and water, if dirty. Disinfectant is recommended to be used if a person was sick or tested positive for COVID within the past 24 hours, there is a high transmission of COVID in the community, there is infrequent hand hygiene, or the space is occupied by those at an increased risk of severe illness. Many disinfectant products recommend keeping the surface wet for a period of time or wearing gloves when using, so it is important to follow the instructions on the product label.

Specifically, for electronics, remove visible contamination if present. If manufacturer guidance for cleaning is unavailable, consider cleaning these surfaces with alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70 percent alcohol. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids. Sprays should be applied to paper towel prior to disinfecting electronics.

Supervisors will provide instructions and appropriate cleaning tools for your workstation.

Worksite Safety

Worksite Employee Screening Guidance

Per DOH guidance, worksite health screening should be implemented for all employees reporting to a worksite prior to reporting to the site or at the start of a shift. A self-screening checklist or use of the CDC Self-Checker tool may be used as a daily screening tool. Individuals experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should not report to a worksite.

For those worksites who are doing onsite screening, a change to self-screening should occur after May 31, 2021.

Post Vaccination Health Screening

The three days post-COVID-19 vaccination, employees may experience COVID-19 symptoms. These symptoms include pain and swelling in the arm where you got the shot, fever, chills, tiredness, muscle pain, nausea, and headache. Apart from a fever, employees should be permitted to work with these symptoms for up to three days post vaccination (date of the vaccine is the day 1). If an employee experiences a fever, they should be excluded from the workplace. If an employee is unable to work through the side effects of
the vaccine, they may be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick Leave (ES) or use your own paid or unpaid leave.

**Health Care Personnel Screening Post COVID-19 Vaccination**

Health care personnel may experience symptoms in the three days after vaccination. Screening procedures for these personnel should follow procedures outlined in HAN-541.

**Self-Screening**

Individuals reporting to a worksite should conduct daily self-screening or use the CDC Self-Checker tool, these questions should be answered by individuals prior to reporting to the worksite.

1. Are you showing any signs or one or more of the following symptoms - Temperature of 100.4 °F or higher, cough, shortness of breath, chills, sore throat, headache, fatigue, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, new loss of taste or smell or difficulty breathing that are not related to a pre-existing medical condition? (Individuals experiencing post-vaccination side effects including chills, tiredness, muscle pain, nausea, and headache in the three days after a COVID-19 vaccination do not need to be excluded from the workplace.)

2. Are you awaiting testing results or other diagnostic procedure to determine COVID-19 for any reason other than an impending medical procedure or employer testing? An employee instructed to quarantine by a health care provider prior to an impending medical procedure will not be permitted in the workplace.

If you responded YES to any questions:

- Do not report to the worksite. Report off work to your supervisor.
- Stay home and contact FMLA Services at 717-346-4667 to discuss leave options available to you.

**Worksite Exposure Protocol**

With the reopening of commonwealth operations comes the possibility of employees entering the worksite with having had exposure to COVID-19. **Employees are encouraged to stay home if they are ill.**

Please note the following guidance may differ for 24/7 operations including correctional facilities, state hospitals and centers, veterans’ homes, and youth development centers, as well as those agencies following CISA’s guidance for critical infrastructure workers. **Employees within such operations should continue to follow the guidance issued by their agency.**
An employee who exhibits **symptoms** (i.e., fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, headache, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, new loss of taste or smell or difficulty breathing) at the worksite will be sent home and advised to seek medical assistance immediately. (If an employee does not have a healthcare provider, they will be referred to their local health department or 1-877-PA-HEALTH.)

**Definitions**

**Close Contact** - an individual who a positive case individual may have been within 6 feet for a consecutive total of 15 minutes or more, or the positive case had direct physical contact (hug or kiss), shared eating or drinking utensils, or spread respiratory droplets directly on them or was exhibiting symptoms (through sneezing or coughing) in the 48 hours prior to symptom onset or positive test administered. See [PA-HAN 533](#).

**Individual under Investigation** – an individual who is awaiting testing results or other diagnostic procedure to determine COVID-19 status. Individuals under investigation should isolate away from the workplace until results are received unless the testing is conducted because of an impending medical procedure.

**Positive Case** - an individual with or without symptoms who tests positive for COVID-19 RNA using a viral test.

**Probable Case** – an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 by health care provider or Department of Health personnel because they meet clinical criteria AND have had exposure to the COVID-19 virus but have not had a confirmatory test

OR
Tests positive for COVID-19 with a respiratory sample using an antigen test.

**Teleworking individual**: If a teleworking employee calls off with a COVID-19 positive diagnosis, no additional actions are necessary. In the event a teleworker is unable to telework because of COVID-19 symptoms, they may qualify for ES leave. Contact FMLA Services for additional information.

**Onsite or fieldwork individual**: If it is determined an individual that has been in the worksite is a positive COVID-19 case, the following steps should be taken:

**Individual Reports as a Positive Case**

1. If the individual is still in the workplace and is a positive case, send them home under the condition they are not fit for duty. If the individual is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and still in the workplace, they should be evaluated using **fitness for duty** procedures and sent home if necessary. Individuals should be advised to contact a health care professional or public health organization for isolation guidance. At the supervisor’s discretion, individuals may be allowed to drive themselves home. Normal leave policies should apply to the absence; however, the employee may qualify for ES leave. Contact FMLA Services for additional information.
When counting days of isolation, day zero is the date the positive test was taken or the day symptoms developed.
When counting days of quarantine, day one is the day after the last contact with the positive case or the first day after the individual is no longer considered contagious (48 hours before symptoms began to day 5).

General Isolation Guidance for an individual who tests positive for COVID-19 regardless of vaccination or booster status:

- The individual should isolate away from the workplace for 5 days.
- If there are no symptoms (asymptomatic) or the symptoms* are resolving after 5 days, the individual may return to the workplace but must wear a mask for 5 additional days.
- Test on or after day 5, if possible. If positive, remain in isolation through day 10.
- If an individual cannot wear a mask, isolate for the full 10 days.
- An individual with moderate illness must isolate for 10 days.
*If the individual has a fever they may not return to the workplace until the fever resolves

2. There is no need to close the entire office/worksite. Staff may remain at work and contact tracing does not need to be performed. Daily enhanced cleaning is already taking place so there is not a need to contact building management to ask for cleaning. See the Post Worksite Exposure Cleaning and Disinfecting section for more information.

3. Maintain confidentiality – Do not reveal the positive COVID-19 individual’s identity.

4. An individual identified as a close contact with someone who is a positive COVID-19 case may need to self-quarantine. The length of quarantine is determined by CDC guidelines, the health care or public health professional.

If an individual was exposed (i.e., close contact) to someone with COVID-19 and is fully vaccinated and has received a booster OR completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine and is not yet eligible for a booster OR completed the primary series or the J&J vaccine in the last 2 months:

- Wear a mask around others for 10 days.
- Test on day 5 if possible. If positive, follow isolation guidance.
- If symptoms develop, stay home (isolate) and get tested.
- If an individual cannot wear a mask, quarantine for 10 days.

If an individual was exposed (i.e., close contact) to someone with COVID-19 and is not vaccinated OR completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine and is eligible but has not received a booster OR completed the primary series or the J&J vaccine more than 2 months ago:

- Stay home for 5 days. After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
- If an individual cannot quarantine, wear a mask around others for 10 days.
- Test on day 5 if possible. If positive, follow isolation guidance.
- If symptoms develop, stay home (isolate) and get tested.
• If an individual cannot wear a mask, quarantine for 10 days.

Those who were a positive case in the past 90 days and remain asymptomatic should not quarantine if identified as a close contact. They should wear a mask around others for 10 days. If an individual cannot wear a mask, quarantine for 10 days.

* Health care, prison and other congregate care settings must follow guidance from the Department of Health regarding quarantine and isolation time periods found in HAN 619. Current healthcare guidance is available in HAN 614.

### Post-Worksite Exposure Cleaning and Disinfecting

In order to ensure protection for employees at worksites, cleaning must occur. If less than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, agencies should clean and disinfect the space.

If more than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, cleaning is enough. You may choose to also disinfect depending on certain conditions or everyday practices required by your facility.

If more than 3 days have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, no additional cleaning (beyond regular cleaning practices) is needed.

### Responsibilities

- DGS or contracted cleaning staff shall be responsible for cleaning office areas, restrooms, and common areas. Soft surface cleaning may be limited depending on the contract specifications.
- Agency staff shall be responsible for cleaning desk surfaces, electronic equipment, and soft surfaces not cleaned by DGS or the contracted cleaning staff.

### Procedure for Cleaning and Disinfecting

Refer to guidance from CDC on how to clean and disinfect. Disinfection shall occur using an EPA-registered disinfectant for COVID-19.

### Cleaning Staff Protection

Cleaning staff shall:
- Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks associated with the cleaning process, including trash removal.
- Wash their hands thoroughly immediately after all cleaning activities.
- Share the COVID-19 Sanitation and Chemical Exposure Safety information sheet with employees prior to all cleaning activities.

### Sanitation and Chemical Exposure Safety
It is important to remember that while cleaning and disinfecting surfaces to prevent the spread of COVID-19, employees should also be protecting themselves and others from exposure to the chemicals they are using.

Chemical exposure can result in irritation to the skin, eyes, nose, throat, and respiratory system – especially if the exposure is prolonged or frequent. The CDC suggests the following safety tips for preventing chemical exposure while cleaning:

- Maintain a current safety data sheet (SDS) for each cleaning chemical used on site. All employees should be familiar with SDSs of products they are using which detail personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements and first aid measures for exposure.
- Employ the use of PPE to at least the level required by the SDS or more protection if required by your supervisor.
- Ensure areas being cleaned are well ventilated with a fan or open window, if possible.
- Keep cleaning products in their original, labeled containers. If transferring to a secondary container, the new container must be labeled with the common name of the chemical and appropriate hazard warnings.
- Do not mix cleaning products or any other chemicals unless specifically directed to by a supervisor.
- Only use cleaning products as directed.
- Avoid contacting your skin with cleaning chemicals.
- Dispose of gloves and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water when cleaning is completed, and gloves have been removed.
- Do not spray cleaning chemicals on or near others while cleaning.
- Be mindful when cleaning of others in the area, who may be sensitive to aspects of certain cleaning products, including smells.
- If a large area needs to be cleaned or harsh chemicals used, discuss cleaning options with your supervisor to determine best times to complete these tasks and whether other employees can be present.
- If an exposure occurs, contact your supervisor and call 911 for emergencies. If possible, get the SDS for the chemical that was being used at the time for transport to the emergency room or doctor to assist medical personnel with treatment options.

Leave Policy

Starting January 1, 2021, the commonwealth issued HR Policy WS004 COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave. This policy was issued to set forth commonwealth-wide guidance on the use of leave pursuant to the COVID-19 pandemic.

More information about the application of this policy, as well as other information about administering leave during the COVID-19 pandemic, is available on the commonwealth’s COVID-19 Leave Information website.

Travel Guidance

Individuals who are positive cases or who have been identified as close contacts should not travel during their 10 day isolation or quarantine period.
See the CDC’s website for a full list of travel precautions, recommendations and requirements for international travel. Travel related quarantine is not required as of March 1, 2021 by PA DOH.

Traveling on Mass Transit

Transit riders should wear masks unless there is a medical reason that prevents them from wearing a mask, or unless they are unable to provide themselves with a mask or a suitable option (bandanna, scarf, etc.) because of economic reasons. Employees should not use buses if they suspect they are sick or if they have symptoms such as fever or difficulty breathing.

Frequently Asked Questions

FAQs have been developed as an additional resource to help both supervisors and employees prepare for the reopening of Commonwealth worksites. The FAQs are located on the Office of Administration’s Returning to Work website.

Resources

Returning to Work Website

The commonwealth has launched a website containing resources for employees. Please visit the Returning to Work website to explore the tools available to help you prepare for the reopening of your worksite.

“COVID-19 Vaccine” FAQs

The Office of Administration has launched a website with frequently asked questions about commonwealth employee COVID-19 vaccinations.

State Employee Assistance Program (SEAP)

As we all work hard to continue serving Pennsylvanians during this challenging time, it is also important to focus on our own well-being.

The State Employee Assistance Program (SEAP) is free and available to serve you, members of your family and anyone living in your household with a variety of services during this time and year-round. These services can help with everything from having trouble sleeping or stress to financial, legal, work or relationship concerns and more.

SEAP also offers you the option of Virtual Visits, where you can talk with and see a counselor from the privacy and comfort of your own home. Counselors are available 24/7. Call SEAP and learn more at 1-800-692-7459 (TTY 711).
There are also a variety of mindfulness tools and resources available that can help you to better cope with stress and feelings of uncertainty. Visit www.liveandworkwell.com (Access Code: Pennsylvania) for more information.

Also, our partner Optum Health has made a variety of tools available to help you and your family navigate through these difficult times. Visit Optum Health for facts and resources about COVID-19 and tips for keeping you educated, healthy and engaged. These resources include free access to the mental health app Sanvello, which offers a variety of resources for managing factors like anxiety and stress.