

COVID-19 FAQ for State Employees (Rev. 3/13/20)

COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as soon as 2 days or as late as 14 days after exposure. This FAQ addresses questions related to state employees, state workplaces, and COVID-19. Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 are available at Michigan.gov/coronavirus. The most current version of these FAQs is available [online](#).

COVID-19-related Absences from Work:

1. Can an agency mandate employees to not report to work if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19? Yes. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, the agency must direct the employee to not report to work. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends staying at home except to get medical care, not going to work, and following local public-health-department protocols.

2. Can an agency require employees to leave work if they have symptoms of COVID-19? Yes. Employees who appear to have new symptoms of acute respiratory illness (fever with cough or shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or who become sick during the day should be sent home by the HR office.

3. If I am absent from or required to leave work because of acute respiratory symptoms must I use leave credits? Yes, sick leave credits should be used to the extent they are available. Annual leave, banked leave, or compensatory time may also be used as permitted by the applicable collective bargaining agreement or civil service regulation. If you do not have any leave credits available, you may qualify for donated annual leave, Family Medical Leave Act leave, or a medical leave of absence.

4. Under what circumstances can I be permitted to return to work if required to leave work or mandated not to report to work because of symptoms of acute respiratory illness? These determinations, including the need for medical certification of fitness to return to work, may vary depending on current threat levels in Michigan and the employee's symptoms. You will work closely with your medical doctor and the local public health department to determine when and if you can return to work.

5. What steps or special precautions should I take if I am at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19? Persons of any age with certain underlying medical conditions (e.g., blood, endocrine, or metabolic disorders; heart, lung, chronic kidney, or chronic liver disease compromised immune systems; pregnancy or pregnancy in the last two weeks; and neurological or neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions) and the elderly have a higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. Federal law, however,

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limits the ability of supervisors to make medical inquiries of employees without symptoms. If you voluntarily disclose a condition to your HR office that may indicate an increased risk of complications, the information must be kept confidential and may be considered for any assistance or accommodation needed.

6. Can I leave work or refuse to report to work because of concern about possible exposure to COVID-19 at work? You must receive supervisory approval to leave work or not report to work, regardless of the reason. Annual leave, compensatory time, or banked leave time may be used in this situation with supervisory approval. The provisions for the respective leave type will apply.

7. Can I stay home because of direct exposure to an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19? If you have been determined by state and local public health officials to be a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and thus need to be isolated at home or in a hospital, you may use appropriate accrued sick, annual, banked, or compensatory leave or unpaid medical leave entitlements for the period of any home or hospital-isolation requirements. In other situations, agencies may consider approval of annual, banked, or compensatory leave; working from home; or other reasonable accommodations based on operational needs.

8. Can I stay home to care for a family member who has been quarantined due to exposure to an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19? If the family member is experiencing symptoms or has been specifically determined in consultation with state and local health officials as appropriately quarantined based on the exposure, you may use appropriate accrued sick, annual, banked, or compensatory leave or unpaid medical leave entitlements for the period of any quarantine. In other situations, agencies may consider approval of annual, banked, or compensatory leave; alternative work schedule; or other reasonable accommodations based on operational needs.

Travel:

9. Can I still go on business travel? To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, all state employees are to avoid all non-essential business travel. Through May 15, all out-of-state business travel is canceled. This includes conferences and large gatherings. Rescheduling, remote attendance, or other feasible options should be used.

10. Can agencies mandate that I remain away from work if I have traveled to areas with elevated COVID-19 levels? Yes, if specifically authorized based on location. If the State Chief Medical Executive has officially recommended that people who visit specified locations remain at home in self-quarantine to see if symptoms will develop,

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the HR office may ask you about travel locations and decide on appropriate work or quarantine arrangements.

If you are sick and mandated to remain away from work, you should use appropriate accrued sick, annual, banked, or compensatory leave or unpaid medical leave entitlements for the period of absence. If you are a self-quarantined employee and not sick, the agency may authorize you to work remotely from home.

Office Policies:

11. What preventive measures should I take to mitigate the spread of COVID-19? In addition to social distancing, working from home, staying home if sick, and other measures discussed in this FAQ, you should take appropriate workplace hygiene steps. This includes covering coughs or sneezes with a tissue or sleeve; avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands; proper hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; regular cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched objects and services; avoiding eating meals in large group settings like cafeterias; and getting an influenza vaccination if you can. The CDC has [more information](#) on steps to prevent illness.

12. What limits are there on business meetings and events? To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, all large gatherings for the next 60 days, such as conferences, trainings, and conventions, are to be canceled or postponed. You should minimize in-person meetings and use phone calls, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, or other feasible alternatives—even for small or internal meetings. Employees' cubicles are their workstations and employees should fully use state resources to practice appropriate social distancing, including teleconferencing and videoconferencing for smaller meetings that would previously have been held in a local conference room or other office buildings.

13. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 what should coworkers be told? The CDC [recommends](#) that employers inform coworkers of their possible exposure to COVID-19 but maintain confidentiality to the greatest extent possible, as required by federal law. Employees exposed to a sick coworker should monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms and stay home if they are sick.

Office Closures:

14. If an office is completely closed due to COVID-19, am I paid regular wages? The governor or her designated representative may completely close a state facility, if

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necessary. Agencies also may temporarily change employees' work location, including relocation to another state office building or working from home.

In the event of a total closure of a facility, employees who are (1) not reassigned and not required by their agencies to perform job functions away from the facility and (2) not absent due to previously approved sick or annual leave use during the closure may use administrative leave for their normally scheduled hours of work according to respective collective bargaining agreements and civil service rules and regulations.

In the event of a temporary change while an employee's normal work location is not closed by the governor, normal pay provisions generally apply.

15. If an office is completely closed due to COVID-19, which employees will be required to work? Employees will be notified by their supervisor or another agency official if the governor has closed a facility and if they must perform required services during the closure.

Working from Home and Flexible Work Schedules:

16. Can I work from home in response to COVID-19 concerns? Agencies should use telecommuting when consistent with the delivery of agency service. Some employees already work remotely under the Alternative Work Schedule Program under an approved written telecommuting agreement. Because of the COVID-19 outbreak in Michigan, agencies may authorize employees to conduct work activities from home without an approved written telecommuting agreement if done using approved hardware and software consistent with state IT policies and other communicated expectations.

17. What are the expectations of employees assigned to work from home? Employees authorized to work from home are assigned in part as a public-health measure to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Employees are not to be out in public or performing personal tasks while working from home. An employee working from home who needs to do non-work tasks during regular work hours must use approved personal leave for the time. Failure to comply with these expectations can result in discipline. Managers can work with employees to determine (1) what hardware, software, or other resources are needed remotely, (2) what assignments can be performed while telecommuting, (3) potential limitations on performance of duties remotely and any necessary adjustments or accommodations, (4) how often and how to update managers, and (5) how communication with coworkers will occur remotely.

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Employee Assistance:

18. What mental health and social services are available to state employees? The [Employee Service Program](#) offers a variety of services to state employees to address personal, professional, and family issues. Mental health services may also be available for enrolled employees through the [State Health Plan PPO or HMOs](#).

19. What conditions must be met and what is the process to apply for donated annual leave? Annual Leave Donation [request forms](#) are available on the Office of the State Employer's [forms page](#). Collective bargaining agreements and Regulation 5.09 explain eligibility requirements to receive donated annual leave.

Alternate staffing:

20. Can an agency ask for volunteers or assign employees to perform tasks not normally assigned? Yes.

21. Will employees be eligible for working out of class pay for performing tasks not normally assigned? Yes, if the criteria for working out of class pay are met.

22. Can someone other than my direct supervisor give me directions? Yes.

23. To meet staffing needs during a COVID-19 outbreak, may agencies extend seasonal employees with needed skills? Yes, seasonal career employees may be scheduled for additional hours beyond the projected end date of the season in accordance with applicable civil service rules and regulations. Employees in non-career positions other than student assistants may work in excess of normal limits only if the state personnel director grants prior approval.

Communication:

24. How will employees learn of human-resources and labor-relations developments about COVID-19? Any COVID-19 information specific to state employees will be at [Inside Michigan](#). The state may also use the DTMB's statewide call list, employee email, or text messaging to provide information. Additional COVID-19 information of general interest is posted by the Department of Health and Human Services at