

To: Connecticut State Agencies
From: The Office of Policy & Management and the Department of Administrative Services
Re: COVID 19-related personnel situations in state agencies
Date: March 4, 2020

In the past when the State faced pandemic situations such as SARS, the Avian (bird) flu, swine flu etc., the State planned for coverage and continuity of operations in the event of a catastrophic outbreak leading to staffing shortages. Consideration was given to potential impacts to critical functions and how they could continue to be performed by telecommuting when possible, or temporary personnel if necessary. The State is in the process of revisiting those plans, and direction on the macro level is forth coming. For more immediate circumstances we offer the following guidance:

Employees who are ill with COVID 19 or manifesting symptoms of the virus should follow the instructions of their health care professional. The illness may or may not arise to the level of an FMLA covered event. The Agency Human Resources Office shall provide relevant FMLA paperwork as appropriate. Employees who are ill should utilize accrued sick leave. Once the sick leave is exhausted, said employees may use other accrued leave including vacation, personal leave or accrued compensatory time. There may be additional paid leave benefits such as advance sick leave, leave donation and sick leave bank as prescribed by the specific collective bargaining agreement or policy.

Employees caring for a family member or someone domiciled in the same residence who is ill with COVID 19 or manifesting symptoms of the virus may utilize sick family leave, vacation, personal leave, or compensatory time upon request for the portion of the day devoted to caregiving. Such employees should stay at home and self-monitor consistent with the CDC guidelines for 14 days from the original date of exposure. Said employees may request to telework for the portion of the day not devoted to caregiving. The illness may or may not arise to the level of an FMLA covered event. The Agency Human Resources Office shall provide relevant FMLA paperwork as appropriate. The Agency Human Resources Officer may request appropriate documentation to support such request.

To the extent that the employee who is providing care to a family member is directed by a medical professional to self-monitor, the employee will be eligible for paid leave pursuant to 5-248(a) for 14 days from the date of exposure.

Employees who have travelled to one of the Level 2 or Level 3 countries as defined by the CDC, and return asymptomatic*, should stay at home and self-monitor

consistent with the CDC guidelines for 14 days from the date of return. If they are approved to telework by their agency head, then they should be allowed to do so during the self-monitoring period. The telework guidelines shall be suspended, as needed, thus allowing them to telework for the entire period and not for only two days per week. Those employees for whom telework is not approved by their agency head shall stay at home and self-monitor consistent with the CDC guidelines, and they shall be placed on paid leave pursuant to 5-248(a) for 14 days from the date of exposure. In either situation, the employee must provide documentation of travel to a Level 2 or Level 3 country, including a travel itinerary and a photocopy of the passport substantiating proof of said travel and date of return.

Employees with a family member domiciled with the employee who travelled to one of the Level 2 or Level 3 countries as defined by the CDC, should stay at home and self-monitor consistent with the CDC guidelines for 14 days from the date of exposure. If they are approved by their agency head to telework, then they should be allowed to do so during the self-monitoring period. The telework guidelines shall be suspended, as needed, thus allowing them to telework for the entire period and not for only two days per week. These employees who are not approved to telework shall stay at home and self-monitor- consistent with the CDC guidelines, and shall be placed on paid leave pursuant to 5-248(a) for 14 days from the date of exposure. The employee must provide documentation that the family member domiciled with the employee travelled to a Level 2 or Level 3 country, including a travel itinerary and a photocopy of the passport substantiating proof of said travel and date of return.

These guidelines are our effort to follow the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) mandates requiring employers to maintain a safe and healthy work environment free of “recognized hazards” to employees’ health or safety that could result in injury or death. Having done everything to ensure the health and safety of employees in the workplace, there is no cause to accommodate employees who are otherwise unwilling to work with others based upon their own personal comfort levels.

Since the CDC* has encouraged individuals to contact a health care provider remotely rather than physically going to a medical facility, requirements for a medical certificate documenting the illness may be waived.

*<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>