



Mendocino County Human Resources Department
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March 13, 2020

To: Elected Officials and Department Heads

From: William Schurtz, Human Resources Director

Re: **2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidelines for Workplace Impact**

Due to the recent news of community spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the following guidelines are to address potential workplace impact, sick leave usage, and related issues. These guidelines are in accordance with current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) recommendations and guidelines. Please note that as information evolves regarding COVID-19, these guidelines may be updated accordingly.

Sick Employee Protocol

1. The County reserves the right to exclude a person with a communicable disease or symptoms of a communicable disease (such as coughing, sneezing, nasal congestion, runny nose, fever, fatigue, wheezing, shortness of breathe, headache) from the workplace facilities, programs and functions if the organization finds that:
 - a. Based on a medical determination by Mendocino County Public Health, such restriction is necessary for the welfare of the person who has the communicable disease and/or the welfare of others within the workplace.
 - i. Contact Human Resources if an employee refuses to leave the workplace at the direction of their supervisor.
2. Employees are recommended to stay at home if sick with flu-like symptoms or symptoms associated with COVID-19, and should follow the CDC's guidelines and stay home from work to self-monitor their symptoms. Employees should notify their supervisor of their absence as soon as reasonably possible.
 - a. Employees are encouraged to use the County Health Plan's Telemedicine option available to them and their dependents. Appointments are available through a secure online video or telephone service allowing employees to receive quality medical care without visiting a physician's office. Call 866.460.6205 or go online at www.plushcare.com.
3. Employees who appear to have a combination of acute respiratory illness symptoms upon arrival to work or show symptoms during the day at work are to be separated from other employees and sent home immediately.
 - a. Acute respiratory illness symptoms include but are not limited to: coughing, sneezing, nasal congestion, runny nose, fever, fatigue, wheezing, shortness of breathe, headache.

- b. Supervisors may contact Public Health Communicable Disease section manager for consultation on acute respiratory illness symptoms in order to make a determination to send an employee home.
 - c. Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are asymptomatic: free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).
 - d. The criteria for employees who should be separated from other employees and sent home is subject to change based on new information from Mendocino County Public Health and/or the CDC.
4. Employees will utilize accrued sick leave, vacation leave, compensatory time off (CTO), personal leave, or leave without pay (LWOP) while needing to be off work due to illness.
5. Employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness symptoms will not be required to provide a healthcare provider's note to validate their illness or return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
 - a. Employees are encouraged to use the County Health Plan's Telemedicine option available to them for a return to work release if so desired. Call 866.460.6205 or go online at www.plushcare.com.
 - b. This change for required notes is effective during the time of the local health emergency related to COVID-19, as declared by the County of Mendocino on March 4, 2020.

Employees Diagnosed with COVID-19

1. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, County Public Health will inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
 - a. Every effort will be made to ensure procedurally sufficient safeguards to maintain the personal confidence about persons who have communicable diseases.
2. Employees who are confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 will be required to obtain a release by their healthcare provider before returning to work.
3. A COVID-19 emergency leave bank will be available to those County employees directly impacted by COVID-19 who have no accruals of leave or exhaust leave accruals while out sick with COVID-19.
4. COVID-19 would qualify as a "serious health condition" under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), allowing an employee to take FMLA leave, if eligible, if either the employee or an immediate family member contracts the disease. The employee should contact Human Resources immediately for coverage under the FMLA.

Workplace Impact Preparations

1. Department directors and supervisors should plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace. Implement plans to continue essential business functions in case of a higher than usual absenteeism.
2. Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members, dismissals of early childhood programs and K-12 schools due to high levels of absenteeism or illness.
3. Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.
4. Departments should consider allowing employees to telework and provide flexible work hours such as staggered shifts to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if the County Health Officer recommends the use of social distancing strategies.
 - a. Departments should follow the County's telework program guidelines for employees who may be designated to work from home. (These guidelines are being finalized and will be available soon)
 - b. **Employees should not be working from home while sick.** Supervisors should encourage employees to telework instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved – if the employee is able to work. An employee could potentially work from home if:
 - i. The employee is out on sick leave due to quarantine or in the 24-hour period recovering from an illness, is asymptomatic, and able to work.
 - ii. The employee, who is not sick, but is on family sick leave taking care of an ill dependent and there is a period of time that the employee is not actively involved in care taking.
5. Continue to monitor the Health Alert and Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates from the Mendocino County Health Officer for recommendations and direction in preparation and response to the COVID-19 outbreak.
6. **COVID-19 has nothing to do with a person's race, ethnicity or country of origin. County employees must continue to treat co-workers and members of the public with courtesy and respect, and shall not engage in unlawful discrimination.**

Please contact Human Resources at (707) 234-6600 if you have any questions regarding these guidelines.

This COVID-19 Workplace Impact Guidelines document will be available online on the Mendocino County Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) webpage and Human Resources webpage.

<https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus>
<https://www.mendocinocounty.org/government/human-resources>