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Manager FAQ: COVID-19 response

Below are answers for managers and supervisors to frequently asked questions related to COVID-19, also known as coronavirus, and the Met Council's impact and response. This page is a living document and will be updated regularly when we have new information or guidance to share.

If you have questions not answered below, please ask your division head. Or, if you would like to ask anonymously, you can submit your question or comment in [this online form](#). Others may be wondering the same thing, and we will review submissions daily and try to address the question or concern in this FAQ or other upcoming communication.

Click on a question below to jump down to its answer, or scroll through the questions and answers on this page.

Managers and supervisors, please visit the Employee FAQ for complete information. Most of our information that is evolving with the pandemic is housed on the employee page to minimize duplication, as the content is important for both employees and managers/supervisors.

Updated 5-20-2021

COVID-19 Leave policy materials (updated policy effective January 1, 2021):

- [COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0](#)
- [COVID-19 Leave request form \(PDF\)](#) (form updated 4-21-21)
- [FAQ January 1 changes to the COVID-19 Leave policy \(PDF\)](#)

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17. Who can I contact at the Met Council for further guidance? (Updated 7-2-20)

1. What should I do as a manager or supervisor to help my employees?

Now is an important time to spend time talking with your employees about how they're feeling and what their concerns are. Prioritize time for this; if possible, try to dedicate time each day to walk around and talk with your employees. Let us know what you hear, and we'll work to find information to address their concerns. You can submit issues you hear through the [online COVID-19 form](#) (anonymously or with your name and email to receive a reply), or you can contact your division director.

2. Can I allow or encourage my team to work from home?

(Updated 3-18-21)

Gov. Tim Walz has provided updated guidance regarding teleworking employees (as of April 15, 2021), removing the legal requirement that employees who can telework must and instead allowing a return to onsite work, while still encouraging remote working where possible.

For now:

- **Employees who can work from home will continue to do so at least through the end of the school year in June and, for many, through Labor Day.**
- Our Pandemic Incident Command Planning Leads are developing our plan for a phased return to the workplace for teleworking employees that may also include changes to our telework policy, allowing for a "hybrid" workplace where conducive to work areas.
- Managers will be engaging with staff and informing the Planning Leads to determine the best working arrangements for both employees and the business needs of the work area.
- Return-to-workplace plans will be coordinated with Facilities and Information Services.

From June through Labor Day:

- A phased return to worksites will begin for teleworking employees. While some teleworkers may begin returning in June, remote employees will not be required to regularly return to the office before Labor Day.

Now is a good time to begin the discussion with teleworking staff about plans to return to onsite work through the transition period. Employee input will be a part of the planning process and inform the overall plan and future telework policy.

Look for more information about our planning for the phased return to onsite work in the regular all-staff COVID-19 email and here on MetNet.

The decision to implement telework does not assume that working on Met Council property is not safe. It's an effort to provide sufficient social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as recommended by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Timeline:

- Met Council implemented flexible teleworking practices beginning March 15. The telework and alternative work schedules procedures were expanded with this initial effort. [Read the March 15 all-staff message for more information on these decisions.](#)
- The Governor signed the Stay Home MN order, [Executive Order 20-20 \(PDF\)](#). To comply with this stay-at-home order, all Met Council employees who were able and authorized to telework started teleworking as of 11:59

p.m. on Friday, March 27. This stay-at-home order superseded the Met Council's implementation of flexible teleworking practices that began March 15.

- The Governor signed the Stay Safe MN order, [Executive Order 20-56 \(PDF\)](#), which replaced the stay-at-home order as it expired on May 18. This order maintained the guideline that all employees who are able to telework must continue to do so.

Notes on teleworking and technology, data practices, and more:

- As you are working from home, please be conscientious of how you're handling non-public data. [Please refer to these guidelines in the FAQ related to data practices.](#)
- Review the [technology section of the employee FAQ](#) for technical support and resources.
- See the question on the employee FAQ regarding [data practices guidance for teleworking.](#)
- Contact the [IS ServiceDesk](#) for assistance or questions.

3. Can I create an alternate work schedule for my staff?

Adjusting work schedules is one way to limit interactions in the workplace and can assist with social distancing. Supervisors are encouraged to consider using staggered schedules where appropriate.

4. Are we adjusting our leave processes for people staying home sick or caring for family members sick?

(Updated 4-21-21)

If your employees are sick, they should stay home. This practice should always be followed, especially during a public health crisis.

While we encourage managers to be flexible with their staff where possible, including allowing situational instances where staff work remotely, we are also aware of operational realities where people are not able to work from home.

If employees are concerned about flex time or telework options, they should coordinate with their managers and if you need help, contact Human Resources Employee Resources Center.

In response to an executive order signed by the Governor early on in the pandemic that provided paid leave for state employees unable to work for reasons related to COVID-19, the Met Council also instituted a policy creating paid COVID-19 leave for employees directly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. This policy was effective March 20 through June 12 for employees who must be absent from work for reasons related to COVID-19 and cannot or are not allowed to telework, and an updated policy 2.0 was in effect June 13 through December 31.

Our updated COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0 is effective January 1, 2021.

Review the [COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0 document](#) for complete information.

Use the revised [COVID-19 Leave request form \(PDF\)](#) to request leave (updated 4-21-21).

Requesting leave:

1. Managers will assign employees to telework where appropriate.
2. Employee requests COVID-19 Leave with their manager.
3. The employee completes the COVID-19 Leave request form.
4. The manager submits the COVID-19 Leave request form to the [Employee Resource Center \(ERC\)](#).
5. The ERC will reach out to the employee to request documentation (documentation needed depends on type of leave requested).
6. Leave is approved for a specific time period. Employees and managers are asked to resubmit the COVID-19 Leave request form to the ERC if additional time is needed.

To obtain documentation, start with your medical provider, virtuwell, or seek testing through the [state's expanded testing network](#). Occupational Health (HR-OccHealth@metc.state.mn.us) can help determine whether you need additional documentation.

If you have any questions about the impacts of COVID-19 leave on your pay, please direct those to the Employee Resource Center (EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us) in Human Resources. Those questions should not go to the Payroll department.

5. May I ask an employee if they have been possibly exposed to the virus during travel?

Yes, managers may inquire about possible exposure to the virus during travel. However, if these inquiries are made, they must be directed to all employees known or believed to have recently traveled to areas affected by COVID-19; such inquiries cannot be directed only to employees of certain races, ethnicities, national origins, or other protected categories.

6. What should I do if an employee becomes ill at work with influenza-like symptoms?

Managers may send home employees who display symptoms of contagious diseases but must be careful to send all employees home who display similar symptoms. If an employee goes home because they are displaying symptoms of a contagious disease, follow continue to normal policies and procedures for FMLA and other leave.

7. What if an employee refuses to come to work out of fear of getting sick?

Unless directed otherwise by a health care provider or the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), employees who are well should report to work or telework.

The employee must continue to follow normal policies and procedures for requesting leave and may be subject to disciplinary action for failing to show up for work or for failing to comply with normal leave policies and procedures.

Supervisors and managers should work to address the employee's concerns with the help of Human Resources as needed, including the application of current recommendations of social distancing in the workplace. If the employee requests time off they need to use accrued leave per the Met Council's normal leave policies and procedures.

Employees feeling anxious about COVID-19 should get accurate information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, MDH, and/or consider contacting Sand Creek, the Met Council's employee assistance program.

8. What if an employee suspects they may have COVID-19?

If they are seeking medical care, they should visit their primary care or urgent care clinic. Employees who think they have COVID-19 should follow the [CDC's instructions if you are sick](#) before visiting a medical clinic for care.

If they think they have COVID-19, they should not use the Well@Work clinic. The HealthPartners Well@Work clinics do not have testing equipment and will not be able to test for the disease.

For employees who have a HealthPartners medical plan, HealthPartners has published information related to COVID-19 care and testing, including what costs are covered, on their website at healthpartners.com/coronavirus. Their page will have the most up-to-date information from HealthPartners.

For members experiencing cold and cough symptoms and who think they've been exposed to COVID-19, HealthPartners created a short assessment using CDC guidelines to help determine if they should be tested. You can take the [screening assessment online at virtuwell](#). It's available 24/7 and at no cost to you. If you have additional concerns, call your primary care clinic before going in.

HealthPartners members can also use the CareLine at no cost. It is available 24/7, 365 days a year. Call 612-339-3663 or 800-551-0859.

9. What should I do if an employee has been confirmed to have COVID-19?

(Updated 1-8-21)

Contact Human Resources to determine appropriate steps to take with the employee and report the absence to the Employee Resource Center (EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us or 612-349-7558). See question #6 above for full information about the new COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0, effective January 1, 2021, or see the top of this page for links to all related documents.

10. What should I do if MDH or the employee's physician prohibits an employee from reporting to work?

(Updated 1-8-21)

If the employee is able to work, consider alternative or flexible work options under the applicable collective bargaining agreement or Met Council policies, if feasible. If an employee is unable to work, even with an alternative or flexible work option, follow the [COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0](#). See question #6 above for full information about the new COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0, effective January 1, 2021, or see the top of this page for links to all related documents.

11. How should I report COVID-19-related absences?

(Updated 4-21-21)

Managers need to report the following employee absences to the Met Council's Employee Resource Center (EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us):

- Employees out sick with COVID-19
- Employees in quarantine (self or doctor-directed)
- Employees out caring for a family member sick with COVID-19

Record these absences in the COVID-19 employee absence form and email the log to EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us. The form should be sent whenever a new absence occurs with the anticipated return date. The form should be sent again when the employee returns to work.

[Download a copy of the COVID-19 Leave request form \(PDF\)](#) (updated 4-21-21).

Bus Operations will report these employee absences to the Employee Resource Center using their leave of absence form with a clear note about the reason for their absence.

12. How will leave be covered if an employee is sick with COVID-19 or is out caring for a family member who is sick with COVID-19?

(Updated 4-21-21)

If an employee is ill with COVID-19 or is caring for a family member who is ill with COVID-19, follow the [COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0](#) and submit the revised [COVID-19 Leave request form \(PDF\)](#) (updated 4-21-21) to the Employee Resource Center (EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us) and include the required documentation. See question #6 above for full information about the new COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0, effective January 1, 2021, or see the top of this page for links to all related documents.

13. Should Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) paperwork be sent to the employee if they miss more than three days of work due to COVID-19?

(Updated 4-21-21)

No. Follow the [COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0](#) and submit the revised [COVID-19 Leave request form \(PDF\)](#) (updated 4-21-21) to the Employee Resource Center (EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us) and include the required documentation. See question #6 above for full information about the new COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0, effective January 1, 2021, or see the top of this page for links to all related documents.

14. When should an employee be allowed to return to work after being sick with COVID-19?

Employees should follow the guidance of their medical provider but may not be required to provide medical certification of fitness for duty upon their return from leave.

If an employee presents with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, HealthPartners advises that they stay home until:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; AND
- Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); AND
- At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

15. Do we need to track the time or costs we've been putting in to prepare for or respond to the impacts of COVID-19?

(Updated 1-8-21)

Yes, we have been directed to track costs (time and expenses) associated with this public health event. This is only for employees who have spent more than 10 hours working directly on our organization's preparation for and response to COVID-19.

If you have time and/or costs that need to be tracked due to COVID-19 tasks, please contact your division finance director and they will help you with next steps.

Marie Henderson, Deputy CFO – Regional Administration – 612-602-1387

Ed Petrie, Director, Finance – Metro Transit – 612-349-7624

Steve True, Senior Manager, Finance – Metro Transit – 612-349-7701

Heather Aagesen-Huebner, Director, Finance & Admin – Community Development, Metropolitan Transportation Services – 651-602-1728

Ned Smith, Director, Finance – Environmental Services – 651-602-1162

For information on how to track time of an employee out on COVID-19 Leave, see question #6 above for full information about the new COVID-19 Leave policy 3.0, effective January 1, 2021, or see the top of this page for links to all related documents.

16. If we are hiring an intern for the summer, is there anything we should do differently this year?

(Updated 5-20-21)

The Met Council is taking appropriate action to safeguard its employees from COVID-19 and one of the actions is social distancing. Internships may be conducted remotely or with adjusted work schedules, depending on the business needs of the work unit. Hiring has already taken place for the 2021 summer internship and Urban Scholars programs.

If you have any questions about the internship program, contact Luis Martinez at Luis.Martinez@metc.state.mn.us.

17. Who can I contact at the Met Council for further guidance?

(Updated 7-2-20)

We encourage you to connect with your direct supervisor or division director if you have questions about critical services and how your work is being prioritized. You can also submit questions through [this online form](#).

For additional information or guidance, contact the following teams in Human Resources:

- General questions: An HR Business Partner (Becky Grams, Walt Joy, Nathan Smith) or any HR manager for help
- Regarding the COVID-19 Leave policy or Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA): Employee Resource Center (EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us)
- Regarding work accommodations: Occupational Health (HR-OccHealth@metc.state.mn.us)

The [Human Resources directory on MetNet](#) has more contact information for staff.

If you have any questions about the impacts of COVID-19 leave on pay, please direct those to the Employee Resource Center (EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us) in Human Resources. Those questions should not go to the Payroll department.

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