

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Employees, Agencies, Boards and Commissions

FROM: Governor Laura Kelly

Date: March 13, 2020

RE: COVID-19 Operational and Workplace Guidance

On March 12, 2020, I declared an emergency in response to the growing COVID-19 outbreak in Kansas. It is a technical designation, there is no need for alarm. The declaration allows for the activation of the **Kansas Emergency Response Plan**, which is intended to increase communication and coordination within state agencies and between local, state and federal partners and units of government.

The information below is intended to provide executive branch employees, agencies, boards and commissions with guidelines on preparing for and responding to issues and questions related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). These guidelines will be adjusted as we continue to learn more about the spread and impacts of COVID-19.

This guidance will be updated as necessary. Employees of the judicial and legislative branches should contact their personnel offices for branch-specific information and guidance.

Personal Care. The best strategy for mitigating the spread of the illness is to practice good personal hygiene. Employees should immediately STOP shaking hands or physically touching others when greeting or interacting.

Employees SHOULD wash hands regularly, avoid touching their faces, cough into their elbow or a tissue (then discard the tissue), increase ventilation into their workspace and disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, phones and handrails regularly.

Employee Leave. If an employee or employee's household member is sick with anything other than COVID-19, the state's regular sick leave policies will remain in effect and the employee will report their time away from work due to the illness according to existing state policies within existing accrual balances.

If an employee or household member shows signs of the COVID-19 virus (see below), their time away from work will be recorded as administrative leave and will not count against the employee's existing leave balances. If an employee is under 14-day quarantine, is symptom free and able to work remotely, they will not need to code their out-of-office time as administrative leave as they will be working.

However, if an employee is unable to work remotely due to their type of job or the development of symptoms, their time off should be recorded as administrative leave.

COVID-19 Symptoms and Care: Self. The COVID-19 symptoms are fever AND lower respiratory symptoms like cough or shortness of breath. If an employee has had close contact, defined as 6 feet or less for 10 minutes or more, with a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19, the employee should stay home and call her or his healthcare provider.

If any employee exhibits COVID-19 symptoms in the workplace, which include a fever AND lower respiratory symptoms like cough or shortness of breath, an appointing authority, supervisor or agency designee, will send the employee home immediately. The employee should seek care from a healthcare provider to determine if the cause of illness is something common like the flu or other respiratory viruses. If the employee is diagnosed with something other than COVID-19, they should return to work when symptoms resolve. No employee may return to work until fever-free for 24 hours without the use of a fever reducing medication or other symptom-altering medications (e.g. cough suppressants). If the employee tests negative for the flu and other common respiratory illnesses, the employee will not return to work for a period of 14-days. The 14-day timeline is based on CDC guidance, it is not optional. The required leave will be coded as administrative leave and will not count against the employee's regular leave.

Any employee, when away from work, who runs a fever of 100.4 degrees (or higher) AND has lower respiratory symptoms like cough or shortness of breath, or displays other COVID-19 symptoms, should not report to work and must notify her or his supervisor immediately. The employee should seek care from a healthcare provider to determine if the cause of illness is something common like the flu or other respiratory viruses. If the employee is diagnosed with something other than COVID-19, they should return to work when symptoms resolve. No employee may return to work until fever-free for 24 hours without the use of a fever reducing medication or other symptom-altering medications (e.g. cough suppressants). The employee's leave will be coded as administrative leave.

Any employee who has traveled to any international location with a **CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice** or higher in the past two weeks will be required to remain away from the workplace for a period of at least 14 days from the time that they left the area.

Information can be found at the following website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>

COVID-19 Symptoms and Care: Others. Any employee who has contact with an individual suspected or known to have the COVID-19 disease must report that contact to her or his supervisor immediately. The supervisor must report any such contact to the appropriate member of the agency's leadership team (e.g. secretary, deputy secretary or executive director).

Any employee who has been caring for a household member or individual with a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher may not return to work until the household member or individual has been fever-free for 24 hours, without the use of a fever reducing medication or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).

If an employee has been caring for a confirmed case of COVID-19, the employee is not allowed to return to work for 14 days following the last contact with the sick individual. If the employee develops signs of COVID-19 disease, including a fever AND lower respiratory symptoms including cough or shortness of breath, they should immediately isolate themselves away from others and call their supervisor.

The employee may work remotely during this time, assuming they do not develop COVID-19 symptoms or start to run a fever. They will not need to code their out-of-office time as administrative leave as they will be working. If the employee is unable to work remotely due to their job or symptoms, the leave will be coded as administrative leave and will not count against the employee's regular leave accruals.

COVID-19 Care: At-Risk Populations. Individuals at risk of severe illness should stay at home and keep away from others who are sick, except in exceptional circumstances. Wash your hands often, particularly after contact with high-touch surfaces. Avoid crowds and closed-in settings with little air ventilation as much as possible. Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel.

- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, like doorknobs, keyboards, cell phones, and light switches.

- In households with individuals at risk of severe illness, provide a protected space for those individuals and have healthy people conduct themselves as if they were a significant risk to those individuals. For example, healthy people should wash their hands before feeding or caring for an at-risk individual.
- Have a plan for if you get sick and stay in touch with others by phone or email.
- Watch for symptoms and emergency warning signs that require immediate medical attention.
- Family members and caregivers can support older adults by knowing what medications they are taking and ensuring there is an extra supply on hand.
- Family members and caregivers can support older adults by monitoring food and other necessary medical supplies (e.g., oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, and wound care supplies) and by creating a back-up plan for securing those essentials if they run out.

Individuals most at-risk include, but are, not limited to:

- older adults and persons of any age with underlying medical conditions, such as persons with a blood disorder (e.g. sickle cell disease or a disorder being treated with blood thinners), an endocrine disorder (e.g. diabetes mellitus), or a metabolic disorder (such as inborn error of metabolism);
- those with heart disease, lung disease (including asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), chronic kidney disease, or chronic liver disease;
- those with a compromised immune system (e.g. those who are receiving treatments such as radiation or chemotherapy, who have received an organ or bone marrow transplant, who are taking high doses of immunosuppressant, or who have HIV or AIDS);
- those who are currently pregnant or were pregnant in the last two weeks; and
- those with neurological or neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions.

Office Operations. The following should be utilized by state agencies, boards and commissions for office operations, as appropriate:

- Managers and supervisors should direct employees to remain home if sick.
- Take steps to consider telework options where feasible. The Department of Administration has an existing telework policy available for agency use.
- If employees significantly rely on mass transit options to access worksites, consider options for adjusting start and end times so that the number of employees using transit simultaneously is reduced.
- Each worksite should take steps to maintain high environmental hygiene standards by cleaning surfaces with EPA-approved environmental disinfectants. In particular, routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops and doorknobs. If feasible, provide disposable disinfectant wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- Agencies shall post notices in public spaces (e.g. waiting rooms) and employee congregating areas (e.g. break rooms) with information including CDC-approved steps to be taken to avoid spread of the disease.
- Agencies that have regular public interface should consider further efforts to mitigate exposure, especially for individuals showing symptoms.

State conferences, meetings and business-related gatherings. It is strongly encouraged that state employees do not attend conferences, meetings or gatherings of 30 (or more) people.

- All state-sponsored meetings or events of 30 or more people are to be cancelled. If employees must attend or host meetings with more than 30 people, they should arrange for a meeting space that allows at least six feet of distance between individuals.
- All outdoor state-sponsored meetings or events with 100 or more people are to be cancelled.
- Agencies should work with staff to develop alternatives for conducting meetings:
 - Limit meeting attendance;
 - Utilize teleconference technology (e.g. Skype, Zoom, etc.) solutions.
- Employees should practice CDC recommended measures (www.coronavirus.gov) to lower risk and prevent spread of viruses (e.g. not shaking hands, practicing social distancing, etc). People

who are at higher risk, including older individuals and people with immunocompromising conditions, should avoid gatherings as much as possible.

Note: For any questions or concerns with the Kansas Open Records Act (KORA) or Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA), agencies should seek legal advice from assigned KORA/KOMA agent based on the specific situation.

State Employee Travel: Domestic. All non-essential domestic travel, including within the state, is cancelled.

- Agencies shall review their existing travel approvals and cancel all non-essential travel. Essential travel is to be approved by agency heads or their designee.
- Employees planning essential domestic travel should routinely check **COVID-19 Information for Travel** (www.coronavirus.gov) for information about COVID-19 for travelers and travel-related industries and take into consideration the location and purpose of their travel.
- When determining essential travel, agency directors should consider several factors:
 - Is the travel related to the agency Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)?
 - Is COVID-19 spreading where the employee is going?
 - Will the employee or their travel companion(s) be in close contact with others during their trip?
 - Is the employee or their travel companion(s) at higher risk of severe illness if they do get COVID-19?
 - Is there a plan for taking time off from work or school, in case the employee gets exposed to, or is sick with, COVID-19?
 - Are there alternative methods that can still accomplish the mission (e.g. video conference, remote access, etc.)?

State Employee Travel: International. All non-essential international travel is cancelled. Agencies shall review their existing travel approvals and cancel all non-essential travel.

All business travel of any kind to impacted areas with a **CDC Travel Health Notice of Level 2** or higher is cancelled. Exceptions may only be approved by Governor Kelly. International travel information can be found at: www.travel.state.gov/traveladvisories.

State employees that have spent time in impacted areas with a **CDC Travel Health Notice of Level 2** or higher are advised to stay at home and monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the

country. State employees should seek medical advice if they get sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.

State employees planning essential travel to other overseas destinations are advised to individually review the U.S. Department of State's www.travel.state.gov website for up-to-date overseas travel information for destination countries and the **Emergency Alert for Coronavirus** page.

Employee Mental and Emotional Health. Employees that may need assistance with coping with stress during this time may seek support by reaching out to the **Employee Assistance Program**. Information can be found at: www.kdheks.gov/hcf/healthquest

COVID-19 Information. As with any disease of this nature, events can change quickly. As a result, it is important that employees stay up-to-date with the latest information from official sources. If you have any questions, please visit the **Kansas Department of Health and Environment's** COVID-19 website at www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus or the **Centers for Disease Control's** COVID-19 website at www.coronavirus.gov.

KDHE also has a phone bank available to answer questions from the public or health care professionals, Monday thru Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The toll-free number is: 1-866-534-3463 (1-866-KDHEINF).

Note: Only official government websites pertaining to COVID-19 should be shared with members of the public, unless specifically authorized to do otherwise by agency leadership.