

COVID-19

Frequently Asked Employment Related Questions (FAQs)

Key Resources

Q: What is the best source of information to learn more about COVID-19?

A: We encourage you to refer to the Washington State Coronavirus Response website: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/> and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention website: <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Q: Where may I view DOC specific information?

A: All COVID-19 resources are located on the DOC website <https://www.doc.wa.gov/news/covid-19.htm>, there is also a link to this information on iDOC.

Q: I have questions, who should I ask?

A: You are encouraged to first view the staff and external frequently asked questions to see if your question is already answered. You may also talk to your chain of command or local human resources. If you are unable to get an answer, questions should be routed through the COVID-19 mailbox: doccovid19@doc.wa.gov

Preventative Measures / General Questions

Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

A: The CDC is regularly updating its list of symptoms as information evolves. Review the latest CDC symptoms here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Q: What should I do if I have symptoms or have been exposed?

A: The CDC has helpful general guidance on what to do if you're sick or if you're caring for a loved one who is sick. The DOH has a flyer on What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with confirmed coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We encourage all of you to stay home and take care of yourself if you feel sick. You should only report to work if you feel healthy. Please see the guidance below regarding DOC's screening process for further instruction.

Q: How can I protect myself?

A: Per the [CDC guidelines](#), the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Additional steps people should take to reduce their risk of getting and spreading any viral respiratory infections, include:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throwing the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces.
- Staying at home and away from others if you are feeling ill.
- Wearing a facemask if you're sick and you need to be around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.

For additional information, rely on trusted sources of information like the [DOH website](#). If you have specific questions that cannot be answered by these resources, you can call the DOH COVID-19 call center: 1-800-525-0127 and **press #**.

Q: Is DOC following the Department of Health (DOH) and Governor's guidance on sending employees home, cancelling large or non-essential meetings and allowing teleworking?

A: Yes. We have communicated with DOC employees throughout the outbreak. For example, we have:

- [Cancelled or postponed non-essential in-person meetings](#);
- [Cancelled visitation in our facilities](#);
- [Reduced the number of guests and volunteers entering our facilities](#); and
- [Encouraged telework options and resources for employees](#).

Q: What can I do to prevent COVID-19 illnesses my workplace?

A: Proactive prevention can include the following strategies:

- Stay home if you are ill and help us all stay healthy.

- If you notice a coworker exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, politely let them know what you've observed and encourage them to talk to their supervisor, then go home and stay home while they are ill. Notify your supervisor about your concerns.
- If someone arrives visibly sick with COVID-19 symptoms and/or has a fever or elevated temperature, supervisors should follow the screening protocol below.
- Appointing authorities and supervisors should encourage telework where able. Consideration should be given to all positions, even if the job has not traditionally been authorized to telework. If employees have the capability and work to do from home, allow this.
- Encourage and practice social distancing (e.g., no large meetings, no more than three people in an elevator or office, stand/sit six feet apart where able).

Facility Screening and Next Steps for Employees

Q. Can DOC deny my entry into a facility/office and direct me to use leave?

A. Given the current pandemic we are facing, we want to take all necessary steps to reduce exposure to employees and those we serve.

Active Screening: [Active Screening protocols have been implemented at all DOC locations](#). All staff, visitors, vendors, contractors, etc. will be required to answer mandatory screening questions and have their temperature taken prior to entry. Individuals who fail any portion of the Active Screening protocol, display obvious signs of a respiratory illness, (i.e. coughing, difficulty breathing) or refuse to participate in the screening process will be denied access to the facility/office. Employees denied entry during the Active Screening process, **and employees who call out sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19**, will be asked to provide their current contact information for follow-up by a DOC medical professional.

Options for Employees Denied Access: Telework and Types of Leave

- Employees who are not allowed to enter their work place following the Active Screening process need to contact their supervisor to discuss whether telework is an option.
- Employees who are not allowed access due to answering 'yes' to one or more of the Active Screening questions, and who are unable to telework, will receive paid leave (Administrative Leave) while awaiting the completion of the secondary screening process.

- Employees who are not allowed access due to a current temperature reading at or above 100.4 degrees will be expected to use the appropriate leave in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement, leave policies and laws.

Secondary Screening: Effective March 22, 2020, DOC implemented a [secondary screening process](#) for employees not allowed entry to their work place **and for employees calling out sick due to symptoms consistent with COVID-19.**

- If an employee declines to participate in secondary screening, they may choose to use their own accrued leave or leave without pay in accordance with the leave laws or applicable Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- A medical professional will call the employee and ask a series of follow-up questions ([DOC COVID-19: Secondary Screening](#)) related to the reason(s) for denial (e.g., cough, sore throat, etc.).
- The medical professional will make a determination on clearance to return to work and date of return.
 - If a medical professional determines an employee is sick, the employee will be expected to use accrued leave or leave without pay in accordance with leave laws or collective bargaining agreement.
 - If the medical professional determines an employee is approved to return to work, the employee will be expected to return to work on their next scheduled workday consistent with the medical professional’s guidance --or work with their supervisor to determine appropriate leave usage.
- Medical professionals will make three attempts to contact the employee. If after three attempts contact is unsuccessful, the employee may receive unauthorized leave without pay, or will need to work with their supervisor to use accrued leave or leave without pay in accordance with leave laws or collective bargaining agreement.

Employees who have a confirmed case of COVID-19 must wait until 14 days after symptoms resolve before returning to work regardless of the release from a healthcare provider.

Potential Exposure and DOC Response to Positive COVID-19 Cases

Q: I’ve heard that an employee, incarcerated individual or individual under our supervision, at my location tested positive for COVID-19. What can you tell me about the person?

A: While we want you to be informed, we discourage rumors and individuals making assumptions that if individuals are not at work, they are out with COVID-19. Remember it is

cold and flu season. You can view the total number of confirmed cases, updated daily, on our [COVID-19 Information Center](#) for more information.

After confirmation of a positive COVID-19 case, DOC will follow the steps outlined by the Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control. This includes providing notification and instructions to those identified by local health departments or contact mapping as close contacts. General information will be provided to all employees at the impacted work locations.

DOC asks employees and others to practice compassion and respect for the privacy of employees who are sick, as well as others who may be under self-quarantine.

Q: How is DOC managing the situation when there are positive COVID-19 cases?

A: DOC is taking every precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19. People who are identified to have had close contact with an individual with a positive result will be asked to self-quarantine at home for up to 14 days (from date of last contact with the individual who tested positive).

Locations at which an individual with positive results worked will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. DOC has also increased routine cleaning to all buildings, regardless of any positive test results.

Q: Will DOC be shutting down offices and/or requiring all employees to telework when positive COVID-19 cases are identified?

A: At this time, DOC does not plan to close any buildings. Telework is being encouraged.

Q. If this spreads through DOC, what contingency plans are in place to ensure things keep running?

A: DOC has prepared continuity of operations plans for maintaining critical functions of the department. The DOC Emergency Command Center has been activated and Incident Response teams are in place at facilities. Our top priorities are ensuring continuity of operations, the safety of our staff, incarcerated, and the public, and the response to COVID-19. DOC is coordinating our response with the state Emergency Management Division and other state agencies and federal resources.

Telework and Employee Initiated Requests to Self-Quarantine

Q: Although I am not currently feeling ill, someone I have been in contact with is awaiting test results/or tested positive for COVID. I want to stay at home to reduce risk to

my co-workers. Can I telework or stay home and receive time off with pay (that the Governor referred to)?

A: These situations and answers vary due to specifics. As a general rule, unless the employee has been directed by a health department official/doctor or based upon guidance on the CDC or DOH website, they would not typically fall into the category of paid time off.

- If an employee, who is not presenting with symptoms and has not been directed to self-quarantine, would like to stay home and teleworking is not an option, they should follow normal call-in procedures, discuss their need with the supervisor and, if approved, use their leave in accordance with the CBA or policy.
- If employee is required to self-quarantine under the [CDC guidelines](#), but is otherwise healthy (not testing positive for COVID-19), and the employer has determined there is no telework option for the employee, the employee will be released with no loss of pay (Administrative Leave) for no longer than 14 days.
- If an employee who is not presenting with symptoms has reason to believe they may have been directly exposed to someone with COVID-19, they should refer to the CDC guidance on how to self-monitor and when to contact their health care provider and should also contact human resources to further discuss.

Each situation is case by case, make sure you work with your chain of command and local HR Office.

Q: I am an employee that falls into a category of being at greater risk of complications from COVID-19. What are my options?

A: Please discuss your specific concerns and needs with your chain of command and/or human resources. Telework may be a viable option. If your position is not conducive to telework, you should discuss other potential options. This may include taking leave or some other form of accommodation. Each situation is case by case, make sure you work with your chain of command and local HR Office.

Q: Can DOC require an employee to work from home?

A: Yes. Pursuant to the management rights article in most of the CBAs, DOC has broad discretion to assign a represented employee to work from home. The employee has to be paid for the work. DOC would review the applicable CBA language, prior to making the assignment. DOC would review agency needs and determine which positions could work from home and how to provide appropriate technical support.

For non-represented employees, [WAC 357-19-175](#) authorizes DOC to reassign an employee to different geographic locations, which could include reassignment to the employee's home.

Q: Do public disclosure issues arise if an employee uses a home computer for state work?

A: It is always best to use DOC issued equipment to accomplish agency work. Use of your home computer should NOT occur UNLESS you have been equipped with a DOC VPN. DOC VPN allows you to use your personal computer to directly access through a secure internet connection all your work drives, but does not allow you to save anything to your personal device. For example, using your personal computer/laptop to check your email via OWA would not subject your computer to public disclosure. However, using your personal email account to conduct agency business is NOT allowed and would subject your personal account to public disclosure. No agency business should be created or saved on a personal device of any kind.

Leave and Child Care Options

Q. What are my options if I unable to report to work due to the need to care for my children since schools are closed statewide?

A. We realize the school closures can be very impactful to employees with school-aged children. State rules, policies and the Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA's) outline the types of leave that are applicable.

- State rules ([WAC 357-31-130](#)) allows the use of accrued sick leave “When the employee’s place of business has been closed by order of a public official for any health-related reason, or when an employee’s child’s school or place of care has been closed for such reason.”
- The rules and CBA's allow employees to use paid leave under the Family Care Act when schools and a child’s place of care is closed due to health-related issues, this is usually limited to 3 to 5 days, you will want to refer to your respective CBA or Policy.
- We are also encouraging supervisors and appointing authorities to be as flexible as possible. This may include allowing eligible individuals to adjust their schedules, days off and explore telework options (dependent upon available resources and the requirements/duties of the position). If this is not practicable, then leave will need to be used.
- For additional information regarding school closures, the [Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has a Q & A document](#) that may be helpful for employees in this situation.

Continuity of Operations / Layoff

Q: What if DOC decides to suspend operations in a particular location due to the pandemic? Will employees be required to take leave for that day?

A: At this time we are not planning on closing any offices. However, if a determination to suspend operations is made, employees will be on paid administrative leave for that day. However, employees with prescheduled approved leave (vacation, sick, personal holiday, etc.) will still be charged with their leave since they scheduled this time off in advance and already expressed their intent not to report to work based on their personal situation.

In the event that operations are suspended for a longer duration of time in a particular location, it is possible employees may be assigned to another work location or may be subject to a temporary layoff. If either of these options are considered the Appointing Authority or designee will consult with local HR and DOC Labor Relations to ensure compliance with applicable CBAs and WACs.

Q: If DOC requires an employee to leave the work site due to a developing health crisis, such as a pandemic flu, must DOC pay the employee for work not performed? Does it make a difference if the building is ordered to be closed?

A: If DOC determines an employee should not be at the work site, DOC will review the applicable CBA or WAC to determine the specific management rights regarding that employee.

Under the CBA's, if DOC determines a work location is non-operational, there may be several options, including: releasing non-emergency personnel with pay, assigning non-emergency personnel to another work location, or implementing a temporary layoff. DOC must comply with the applicable CBA regarding assigning to another work location or implementing a temporary layoff.

For non-represented employees, WAC [357-31-260](#), [357-31-265](#), [357-31-270](#), [357-31-275](#), and [357-31-280](#) provides additional information.