

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are my leave options if I get sick with COVID-19 or I have to care for my family member who is sick with COVID-19?
 - o Unless directed otherwise by a health care provider or the Minnesota Department of Health, employees who are well should report to work, or if their job responsibilities can be performed through telework on an ad hoc, short-term basis, they may telework if arranged with their supervisor.
 - o If an employee is not well enough to report to work, but is well enough to work from home, if their job responsibilities can be performed through telework on an ad hoc, short-term basis, they may telework if arranged with their supervisor. If an employee is ill or is caring for a family member who is ill, they use accrued sick leave to stay home, as provided by the applicable collective bargaining agreement or compensation plan.
 - o If an employee is ill with COVID-19 or caring for a family member who is ill with COVID-19 and they have exhausted all of their accrued sick leave, their absence will be covered by paid administrative leave as provided by the applicable collective bargaining agreement or compensation plan.
 - o Questions? Please contact your HR office.

2. Can I travel out of state for work?

No, unless you receive an exception by your agency head and commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget. Exceptions will be considered if travel is required for the enforcement of Minnesota law, to meet the state's contractual or other legal obligations, or for the protection of public health, welfare, and/or safety. Contact your supervisor or HR office with questions. This is effective March 11, 2020 until further notice.

3. What is a state of emergency?

Governor Tim Walz has declared a state of emergency to address the public health crisis. This may provide your agency with additional authority to adjust even legally required activities or timelines to protect the health and safety of state workers and all Minnesotans.

4. Can I telework?

We are encouraging state employees whose job duties can be performed through telework on an ad hoc, short-term basis to do so in this situation. Contact your supervisor to determine whether this is feasible given your job responsibilities, and to consider options.

5. How do I implement social distancing? (updated: 3/15/20)

Social distancing measures involve limiting public interactions to decrease and slow the spread of the virus in the community. See the [Minnesota Department of Health publication for a description of social distancing](#). Employees should practice social distancing to the extent possible given business needs. Examples of potential social distancing at work may include:

 - o Employees try to keep 6-10 feet away from each other as much as possible
 - o Hold staff meetings in larger rooms
 - o Switch from in-person meetings to virtual meetings where possible

- Work with your supervisor to determine whether work schedules can be adjusted or schedules staggered to limit employee interaction in the workplace
6. What about staggered work schedules?
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.
 7. What if I live in another state and commute to Minnesota for work?
You should still report to work, or telework if arranged with your supervisor.
 8. What are my work options if I am at risk for severe disease?
Notify HR that you are at risk for severe disease and work with them to determine accommodation options. This may include workspace in a separate office, telework, etc.
 9. What can employees do to care for their children if school or daycare is closed? (updated: 3/15/20)
Employees who are authorized to telework, including ad-hoc telework, may do so even if their dependents are present in the remote work location, with supervisor approval, so long as the employee is actually conducting their job duties and actually working their normal work schedule or flexing their time as approved by their supervisor. State leaders are working on options for those who can't currently telework.
 10. Should I attend or host meetings and events for work? (posted 3/15/20)
Events with 250+ individuals should be cancelled or postponed. Events serving high risk populations should be limited to less than 10 participants. In-person staff meetings may still occur; however, please implement social distancing strategies to prevent the spread of illness. If staff meetings can be postponed or conducted virtually, consider these options to limit employee interaction.

If the agency has legally required meetings or events, the agency should work with agency General Counsel, or the Attorney General's Office to assess options for adjusting these requirements during the state of emergency to protect the health and safety of employees and the public.
 11. What can I do to reduce my risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus? (posted 3/15/20)
You should follow the same precautions used to avoid contracting colds, influenza, or other infectious diseases. These precautions include staying home when sick, washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, avoid touching your face and covering coughs and sneezes.
 12. I have concerns about coming into work because of possible exposure to the virus. What are my options? (posted 3/15/20)
You should continue to follow normal policies and procedures for requesting and taking leave. You may request leave from work using the appropriate sick or vacation leave time, and supervisors must follow their normal approval procedures. You may also discuss your concerns with your agency HR office or review information on the State of Minnesota Employee Assistance Program (EAP) LifeMatters website or Minnesota Department of Health's website.

EAP LifeMatters consultants are available to state employees by phone at 651-259-3840 or 1-800-657-3719.

13. If my job requires me to work with the public, do I have to come to work? (posted 3/15/20)
Yes. Unless you are directed not to, you must still report to work as regularly scheduled. If you are assigned to work in a situation that would put you at greater risk of exposure than in your normal day to day activities, the agency will determine the appropriate protective measures, such as protective equipment, social distancing plans, and increased hygiene measures.
14. What if my time off is not approved and I don't come to work? (posted 3/15/20)
You will be treated just as you would if you did not show up for work any other time. Employees failing to come to work without approved leave time may be subject to discipline per the applicable collective bargaining agreement or compensation plan.
15. What should I do if I suspect my co-worker was exposed to COVID-19 or is exhibiting symptoms of it? (posted 3/15/20)
You should discuss your concerns with your supervisor or someone in your agency HR office. You must continue to report to work and perform your work as scheduled. Do not confront your co-worker directly and allow for HR to determine whether to speak with your co-worker.
16. What should I do if I have been in close contact with a person confirmed to have COVID-19, or I recently traveled to an area with ongoing spread? (posted 3/15/20)
If you are exhibiting symptoms such as cough and respiratory issues, you should call your healthcare provider as soon as possible and provide details of your contact or travel, along with symptoms. Calling ahead will help your healthcare provider to prepare for your visit so that others will not be exposed or infected. Your healthcare provider will work with the Minnesota Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to determine if you need to be tested. If you are not showing symptoms, you may decide to self-isolate to limit exposure to your co-workers. Your agency may determine that teleworking or flexing your work schedule is an option. If these are not options available to you, you and your supervisor can consider your applicable collective bargaining agreement or compensation plan for further options.
17. If the agency needs to re-assign roles and responsibilities that are not normally part of my job, either in my agency or another agency, do I need to perform the new duties, or can I refuse the assignment? (posted 3/15/20)
You must work as assigned unless granted an exception. As confirmed cases grow, employees should anticipate that they may be required to assist in performing work for absent or ill co-workers or ensure that the State is able to provide critical services.
18. Can I refuse to perform the new duties if they put me at greater risk of being exposed to the virus? (posted 3/15/20)
No, you must work as assigned unless granted an exception. If the agency determines that the new duties would place you at greater risk of exposure to the virus, the agency will determine the appropriate protective measures, such as protective equipment, social distancing plans, and increased hygiene measures.

19. What if a state employee is returning from travel out of the state or the country? (posted 3/15/20)

The employee should self-quarantine at home for three days to monitor for COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.

If the employee traveled from or through a COVID-19-affected region, they should first refer to instructions on the CDC website about returning from travel. Then the employee should notify their supervisor about their status as it relates to current CDC guidance. If the CDC guidance or their medical professional indicates the employee should stay home, the employee should stay home. See use of leave FAQ [[link to faq](#)]