

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

**Thank you for reviewing the latest guidance on the COVID-19 emergency.
Updated questions and/or responses are noted with a ►.**

General Reminder

Placer County is committed to maintaining a respectful, productive, inclusive and equitable workplace. Therefore, all employees are expected to act with fairness, civility, integrity and to treat all coworkers and customers equitably. As we move through this challenging time these expectations and our values should be our guiding principles as we serve the public.

CORONAVIRUS

What is Coronavirus?

Information on Coronavirus can be found at the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) website and the [County's Coronavirus website](#).

What are the symptoms of Coronavirus?

Symptoms can include fever, coughing, sore throat, congestion and shortness of breath.

When do symptoms appear?

The CDC believes symptoms will appear between 2 and 14 days after exposure to the virus.

What people are high risk?

- People 60 and older;
- People with underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes;
- People who have weakened immune systems; and
- People who are pregnant.

What are common ways to become infected with COVID-19?

You generally need to be in close contact with someone with COVID-19 to get infected. Close contact includes scenarios like living with or caring for a person with confirmed COVID-19, being within six feet of a person with confirmed COVID-19 for about 10 minutes, or if someone with COVID-19 coughed on you, kissed you, shared utensils with you or you had direct contact with their body fluids.

Who should quarantine for potential COVID-19 exposure?

If you have been in close contact with a person confirmed or likely to have COVID-19, you should stay home for two weeks after your last exposure and monitor yourself every day for fever or respiratory symptoms.

People confirmed or likely to have COVID-19 include those:



COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

- who have had a positive lab test for COVID-19
- who have been informed by a physician that they are likely to have COVID-19
- who have signs and symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19 after being in close contact with a person who had or was believed to have had COVID-19.

Close contact is currently defined as:

- being within six feet for more than 10 minutes OR
- having unprotected direct contact with secretions (e.g., sneezed or coughed on)

Exceptions to this quarantine guidance include:

- Health care workers and emergency responders
- Other essential workers (as determined by Department Head), only if:
 - Their role does not involve regular interaction with large numbers of people, AND
 - Their role cannot be fulfilled by other personnel.

In accordance with [CDC guidance](#), critical workers falling in these categories but remaining asymptomatic should adhere to the following practices prior to and during their work shift:

- self-monitor temperature and assess for symptoms
- wear a face mask in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure
- continue to maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit
- continue to clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely

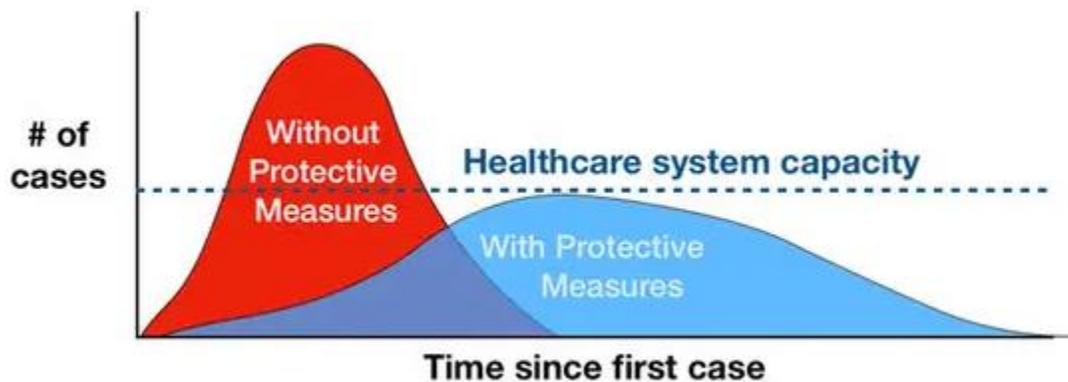
In addition to employee self-monitoring, Placer County may pre-screen employees by measuring temperature and assessing symptoms prior to them entering the facility and/or starting work (determined by Department Head).

Why should we be concerned with slowing the spread of the virus?

It is important to take protective measures in order to protect those who are most vulnerable to severe illness in our community and allow the health care system to maintain adequate resources to address severely ill patients. The following graphic represents the goal of slowing virus spread and “flattening the curve.”

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020



Adapted from CDC / The Economist

What can be done to prevent the spread of the virus?

1. Stay at home when sick. Do not return to work for:
 - a. At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); AND
 - b. At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
2. Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
4. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
5. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces with regular household cleaning spray.
6. Cover cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in trash.
7. Avoid travel to high-risk areas.
8. Practice social distancing as described below.
9. Utilize face covering.

What is social distancing?

Social distancing is a community mitigation measure used to help slow the spread of the virus. This is now a priority for County employees. Maintain approximately six feet of distance from others.

Should masks be worn?

Cloth face coverings - such as a bandana, scarf or homemade cloth cover - are now recommended by the Health Officer when leaving the house for essential activities including essential work. Surgical masks or N95 respirators are not currently recommended.

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

If an employee wants to wear their own face covering or mask, they should be encouraged to do so unless it is inconsistent with their job duties.

What tools can I use to achieve social distancing?

- Continue to use offices and cubicles that allow coworkers to be at least six feet apart. Common areas should be used sparingly and employees should limit close interaction.
- Utilize virtual meetings when possible. Instructions are available in the [Skype for Business User Guide](#) or the [Microsoft Teams Quick Start Guide](#).
- Postpone or cancel all non-critical meetings.
- Postpone or cancel all non-mandatory travel and trainings, such as conferences.
- Discuss temporary telework and flexible work schedules with your supervisor.

Many schools in the area have temporarily closed. Is the County closed?

The County has transitioned to offering essential and mandatory services during this challenging period. An ongoing list of closed or limited public counter services can be found [here](#).

How are County facilities being cleaned?

The County has increased its custodial services, with particular attention to high-volume areas. All employees are responsible for regularly cleaning their individual work areas and may be assigned to assist with disinfecting common surface areas.

What can an employee do who is feeling anxious about the Coronavirus?

Get accurate information from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) website and the [County's Coronavirus website](#).

Employees are also welcome to contact Managed Health Network to utilize Employee Assistance Program benefits, including financial and legal services. Managed Health Network is available by calling (800) 242-6220 or via their [website](#) (registration code: placercounty).

EMPLOYEE ASSIGNMENTS

Should all employees be reporting to work?

All County employees are Disaster Service Workers. On or after March 17, 2020, at the direction of the CEO, Department Heads identified employees performing essential job functions and directed them to work either at their normal location or via telework. All remaining employees who are available to work as Disaster Service Workers are directed to shelter at home until called upon by the County.

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

Are employees subject to the Governor's Stay at Home Order?

On March 19, Governor Newsom issued an [executive order](#) requiring Californians to stay at home. As part of critical government services and Disaster Service Workers, County employees deemed essential by their Department Heads and required to report to work on site are [exempt](#) from the order.

What should an employee at high risk or caring for people at high risk do?

All employees are expected to work or be available to report to work. In support of this expectation, people of higher risk with pre-existing conditions may request a reasonable accommodation in an effort to support continued ability to work.

Employees should work with their supervisors to address their concerns. For leave options that may apply, see Employee Leaves.

What happens when a qualifying family member's school or caregiver location is closed?

An employee may use all available leave balances including sick leave if a qualifying family member's school or caregiver location is closed for health-related reasons. This also applies to the closing of private schools. The employee may be assigned telework or a flexible work schedule, if feasible, with the authorization of their supervisor/manager.

For leave options that may apply, see Employee Leaves.

If employees are working, how should they report time?

Employees should record time worked, whether on site or teleworking, according to the department's normal timekeeping guidance.

Employees working on activities related to the COVID-19 emergency must code those hours to include the Grant Worktag GR00719. Exempt employees must ensure that all hours worked beyond their normal schedule are captured through Statistical Service Units (SSU) with the Grant Worktag GR00719. It is essential that all hours worked related to the emergency be captured to assist the County with reimbursement of costs.

If employees are available to work but have not been assigned to work on site or remotely, how should they report time?

If the employee is available to work but their Department Head, or designee, has determined their job functions are non-essential and cannot be performed remotely, the employee should code their regular work hours as COVID-19 Office Closure. Please refer to the [Workday Job Aid](#) for details.

What if an employee is not available to work because of a pre-approved vacation, illness, medical appointment, other leave needs?

Employees who are not available to work may utilize their accrued leave balances.

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

EMPLOYEE LEAVES

What should an employee with symptoms do?

Stay at home when sick. Any employee with symptoms of a communicable illness (such as fever, coughing, sore throat, congestion, and/or shortness of breath) should go home immediately. Do not return to work for:

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

An employee is unavailable to work or be called upon as a Disaster Service Worker for reasons including illness, caring for a sick family member, or school/daycare closures. How does the employee receive pay?

1. Accrued sick leave
2. All other accrued leave balances, such as vacation, floating holiday, compensatory time earned (CTE), or management leave

Employees needing time off on or after April 1, 2020 may also be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick Leave (see EPSL below).

► What is Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL)?

Pursuant to the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) (H.R.6201), full-time employees needing time off work on or after April 1, 2020, may be eligible for an additional 80 hours of sick leave (pro-rated for part-time permanent employees). Employees must certify that they are unable to work or telework due to one of the following reasons:

1. Employee is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19
2. Health care provider has advised the employee to self-quarantine
3. Employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever [defined as 100.4° F or greater using an oral thermometer], coughing, and/or shortness of breath) and seeking a medical diagnosis
4. Employee is caring for someone (an immediate family member, roommate, or a similar person with whom they have a relationship that creates an expectation that they would care for the person) subject to a shelter-in-place order or quarantine advised by a health care provider
5. Employee is caring for their child under 18 years of age whose school or place of care has been closed, or whose childcare provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions, and another suitable individual is not available to provide care (such as a co-parent, co-guardian, or the usual child care provider)

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

6. Employee is experiencing a substantially-similar condition

EPSL hours will expire on December 31, 2020. Employees are not entitled to reimbursement of any unused EPSL hours upon expiration or upon termination, resignation, retirement or other separation from employment.

▶ **What are the steps an employee should take to request EPSL?**

Employees will need to complete and submit a [COVID-19 Request for Emergency Paid Sick Leave](#) form with the appropriate supporting documentation to their department's HR Liaison or to the Human Resources department at pchrd@placer.ca.gov.

Employees should not be applying any time for EPSL on their timesheets unless the employee has formally requested the benefit and has been approved through Human Resources in the Workday system. EPSL is being processed as a Workday transaction and is not an automatic benefit.

▶ **How does the employee know if EPSL has been approved?**

Once the completed form and documentation are received, Human Resources will determine the employee's eligibility and notify the employee and the department if approved. If it is determined that the employee is eligible for the EPSL, the employee will receive information and instructions on the use of the leave and the full allotment of hours will become available through the Workday system for COVID-19 related absences. After the allotment of hours are posted in Workday, the supervisor will review and approve individual requests to utilize the EPSL hours based on COVID-19 related reasons as listed above.

▶ **Is the employee required to submit a new request form for every absence?**

Employees are not required to complete additional certification forms for every EPSL request for time off following the initial approval. Instead, the employee will submit the request to utilize EPSL by selecting "**COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave**" in Workday. The employee's supervisor should only approve EPSL for qualifying COVID-19 related reasons as listed above.

If the employee requests to utilize EPSL hours intermittently for school/childcare closures, the employee and the supervisor should work together to develop a schedule for intermittent leave that allows the employee to take the leave when reasonable but still meets the needs of the department. Additional guidelines for utilizing EPSL intermittently are outlined below.

▶ **How does the employee report EPSL leave on their timesheets?**

If the employee was determined eligible and approved, the EPSL hours will be viewable in Workday as "**COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave**" in the Time and Leave > Time Off Balance tab in Workday. These hours are separate from the regular sick leave accrual and will be available for the employee to utilize as a Time Off on their timesheet for COVID-19 related reasons listed above.

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

Employees should not be applying any time for EPSL on their timesheets unless the employee has formally requested the benefit and has been approved through Human Resources in the Workday system.

EPSL hours can be utilized prior to the use of accrued leave balances for COVID-19 related time off (i.e., accrued leave hours do not have to be exhausted prior to use of COVID-19 EPSL).

► Can EPSL be taken intermittently?

EPSL **cannot** be taken intermittently unless the employee is taking time off to care for their child under 18 whose school or place of care has been closed or is unavailable due to COVID-19 precautions and another suitable individual is not available to provide such care. Guidelines for intermittent time off for school/childcare closures are as follows:

- Intermittent time off must be taken in increments of two (2) hours or more
- Employees must work a minimum of 20 hours per week when taking intermittent time off
- Employee and the department should work together to develop a schedule for intermittent leave that allows the employee to take the leave when reasonable but still meets the needs of the department

What is the rate of pay for the 80-Hour EPSL?

EPSL hours will be paid at the employee's full regular rate of pay.

What if an employee is unable to work for an extended period of time due to caring for an eligible child at home because of school or childcare closure?

For leaves beginning on or after April 1, 2020, the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) [FFCRA] provides for the Expanded Family and Medical Leave Act (EFMLA) benefits. This amendment provides eligible employees with 12 weeks of protected leave in order to care for a child under 18 or dependent adult child who is home because of a school or daycare closure. There is a 10-day waiting period for paid benefits, after which employees are entitled to paid leave at two-thirds (2/3) their regular rate of pay. Employees may utilize EPSL or other accrued leaves during the waiting period and may supplement the 2/3 pay with their accrued leave balances to achieve 100% of their regular rate of pay. Employees who exhaust all accrued leave balances may also be eligible to supplement with Unemployment Insurance administered by the State of California.

► Are all employees eligible for Expanded FMLA (EFMLA)?

The FFCRA legislation recognizes the need to maintain critical services and defines those who may be excluded as:

Anyone who serves as a law enforcement officer, correctional institution personnel, physician, nurse, public health personnel, emergency management personnel, 911

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

operator, child welfare worker and service provider, public works personnel, and persons with skills or training in operating specialized equipment or other skills needed to provide aid in a declared emergency, as well as individuals who work for such facilities employing these individuals and whose work is necessary to maintain the operation of the facility.

Placer County deemed the need to exclude health care providers and emergency responders from the extended leave associated with EFMLA to ensure public health, public safety, and continuity of these critical operations. Therefore, not all employees are eligible for EFMLA if their job classification within their department meets the exclusion criteria for EFMLA, as determined by their Department Head.

► **What are the steps an employee should take to request the new EFMLA for school or daycare closures?**

Employees need to complete and submit a [COVID-19 Request for Expanded FMLA](#) form with the appropriate supporting documentation to their department's HR Liaison or to the Human Resources department at pchrd@placer.ca.gov.

What if an employee cannot work due to being diagnosed with COVID-19?

An employee who has contracted COVID-19 may be eligible for a protected leave of absence under the FMLA/CFRA and wage replacement such as State Disability Insurance, depending on the labor group.

What if an employee needs to take time off work to care for an ill qualifying family member?

The employee may be eligible to utilize protected leave for a leave of absence from work under the FMLA/CFRA to care for a qualifying family member if the family member has contracted COVID-19 and is considered to have a serious health condition. In addition to utilizing accrued leave balances, wage replacement such as Paid Family Leave administered by the State of California may be available depending on the labor group.

What should an employee do if they do not have enough accrued leave balances to cover a voluntary absence caused by COVID-19?

If an employee exhausts available leave balances, unpaid hours (UPH) may be applied. If the employee has questions, they should discuss the matter with their supervisor and contact Human Resources.

What if an employee is not able to make use of vacation leave during this emergency period?

Temporary, one-time changes to the County's vacation cash out policy have been made due to COVID-19. Rules that an irrevocable form must have been received by December 31, 2019 in order to cash out and that one half of your vacation hours must be accrued prior to cash out have been temporarily suspended.

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

Commencing in Pay Period 21, employees may cash out up to 80 hours of vacation leave accrued, according to the following terms:

1. Employees must be within 80 hours of the applicable vacation cap at the close of Pay Period 20 to be eligible to cash out.
2. During this temporary change from Pay Period 21 through Pay Period 26, employees can only cash out up to 80 hours and are limited to no more than two requests.
3. A vacation cash out form should be completed for each request.
4. The maximum total vacation hours that can be cashed out in calendar year 2020 is still 100 hours, for those who qualify.

► **What other benefit programs may employees be eligible to utilize?**

Disability Insurance - Sick or Quarantined (PPEO employees)

If an employee is unable to work due to having or being exposed to COVID-19 (certified by a medical professional), they can file a Disability Insurance (DI) Claim. DI provides short-term benefit payments to eligible workers who have a full or partial loss of wages due to a non-work-related illness, injury, or pregnancy.

Paid Family Leave - Caregiving (PPEO employees)

If an employee is unable to work because they are caring for an ill or quarantined family member with COVID-19 (certified by a medical professional), they can file a Paid Family Leave (PFL) claim. PFL provides up to six weeks of benefit payments to eligible workers who have a full or partial loss of wages because they need time off work to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child.

Unemployment - Reduced Work Hours, or Shut Down

If an employee's hours have been reduced or the department has shut down operations due to COVID-19, the employee can file an Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim. UI provides partial wage replacement benefit payments to workers who lose their job or have their hours reduced through no fault of their own.

If the employee has questions, they should contact Human Resources.

TELEWORK

How is a telework assignment initiated?

If a telecommuting agreement is not already in place, employees should complete the appropriate agreement and obtain approval from their supervisor. Agreements, resources, and training materials can be found on MyPlacer's [Telecommuting site](#).

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

What if an employee is impacted by closures of schools and other caregiving locations? Can they be assigned telework?

An employee may use all available leave balances, including sick leave, if a qualifying family member's school or caregiver location is closed for health-related reasons. With authorization of supervisors/managers, there are also several other temporary options to address employees impacted by this emergency, such as intermittent time off, flexible work hours, alternate work schedules, and telework.

What if an employee is having technical issues with teleworking?

Refer to MyPlacer's [Telecommuting site](#) for technical assistance. Please contact your department's IT Liaison or the IT Service Desk at (530) 889-4357 if you are unable to connect remotely to the County's network.

What are the top ten things I need to know about telework assignments?

1. Telework allows the employee to work from a remote site other than their primary work location. It does not change their employment status or number of hours worked.
2. Employees are expected to commit their concentration on work assignments to the same extent as when working in the office.
3. Employees and supervisors should regularly document the specific work assignments and expected delivery dates. Unless prior alternate arrangements are made, due dates will be honored.
4. Employees should maintain productivity and support efforts to measure and monitor their performance.
5. Employees must be available by telephone and email during their scheduled work hours. If not immediately answered, calls forwarded from the primary work location must reach a professional voicemail message.
6. Employees must be able to physically report to the primary work location if directed to do so.
7. Employees must obtain pre-approval to use accrued leaves, as appropriate, to attend to personal matters during telework hours, other than during rest and meal breaks.
8. Telework is not intended to be a substitute for childcare or elder care. During this emergency period, employees may need to request intermittent time off and/or flexible work hours to accommodate other responsibilities.
9. Employees must treat the telework location as an extension of the office, including a safe and ergonomic workstation.
10. Telework is not equivalent to paid administrative leave.

What steps should be taken by an employee working remotely with concerns about ergonomics?

1. Test various work surfaces and chairs available at home.

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

2. Complete "[Ergonomics – A Training Guide for Healthy Office Workers](#)" training.
3. Discuss concerns with supervisor to brainstorm alternatives.
4. Contact Joe Morgan, Risk Management Administrator in Human Resources, at (530) 886-2606 or jmorgan@placer.ca.gov.