

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

NOVEMBER 25, 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 forward with reopening workplaces safely and resuming onsite operations, these expectations and values should be our guiding principles as we serve the public.

STATE GUIDANCE

The County is resuming onsite department operations in alignment with [State guidance](#). In addition to risk assessment and site-specific protection plans, the County is taking the following precautions:

- Train employees to limit the spread of COVID-19, self-screen for symptoms, and stay home when ill
- Mask or cloth face covering at all times unless alone in an office, room or car
- Physical distancing to the maximum extent possible
- Individual control measures, including frequent handwashing and the use of face coverings
- Regular cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas

SUPPLIES

Departments are reviewing which supplies will be required for their operations based on [industry checklists](#). Supplies may include soap, gloves, cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, masks, disinfecting wipes. Facilities Management is coordinating to ensure that the County's supply levels are regularly reviewed and maintained to ensure a safe, smooth, and effective return to onsite operations.

TRAINING

Employee training to prevent COVID-19 is available through [Placer Learns](#). Training objectives include:

- Preventing the spread of COVID-19
- Self-screening, including temperature and/or symptom checks using [CDC guidelines](#)
- Staying home when sick

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- Identifying symptoms that may require medical treatment
- Frequent handwashing (or using hand sanitizer when unable to wash hands)
- Physical distancing, both at work and during non-work time
- Proper use of face covering
- Training resources for personal protective equipment (PPE), if required for job assignment
- Resources for leave benefits

COUNTY FACILITIES

The County has increased its custodial services, particularly in 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. In addition, durable stickers, signage, visual aids, and/or plexiglass shields may be requested by management for counter operations, lobbies, hallways, etc.

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS

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 15 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.

What are known symptoms of COVID-19?

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose

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- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. CDC will continue to update [this list](#) as they learn more about COVID-19.

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

1. Stay at home when sick.
2. Consider screening yourself for fever and coronavirus symptoms every day. For example, you could take your temperature with a thermometer to determine if your temperature is 100.4°F or higher. Do not attempt to enter the workplace if any of the following are present:
 - a. Symptoms of COVID-19
 - b. Fever equal to or higher than 100.4°F
 - c. Are under evaluation for COVID-19 (for example, waiting for the results of a viral test to confirm infection)
 - d. Have been diagnosed with or tested positive for COVID-19 and not yet completed the 14-day quarantine period when not exhibiting symptoms. If the employee develops symptoms, the employee should not report to work until:
 - i. At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset; AND,
 - ii. At least 1 day (24 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication and improvement in respiratory symptoms.
 - iii. If not tested, the employee should get tested for COVID-19.
3. Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
5. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
6. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
7. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in trash.
8. Avoid non-essential travel. Stay home as much as possible
9. Practice physical distancing as described below.
 - ▶ Wear a mask or cloth face covering at all times unless alone in an office, room or car.

In addition to self-monitoring, Placer County may pre-screen employees by measuring temperature and assessing symptoms prior to them entering the facility and/or at the start of their shift (as determined by Department Head).

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What is physical distancing?

Physical distancing is a community mitigation measure used to help slow the spread of the virus. This is now a priority for County employees to maintain at least six feet of distance from others.

► Should masks be worn?

On November 16, 2020, the California Department of Public Health issued updated [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#). This guidance states that people in California must wear face coverings at all times when outside their homes with some exceptions as noted below. Since COVID-19 can be spread without feeling sick, the use of face coverings by everyone can limit the release of infected droplets when talking, coughing, sneezing, singing, exercising, shouting, or other forms of increased respiration, and they can also reinforce physical distancing by signaling the need to remain apart. In addition, increasing evidence also demonstrates a cloth face covering or mask also offers some protection to the wearer. This guidance indicates exemptions in the following specific settings:

- Persons in a car alone or solely with members of their own household.
- Persons who are working in an office or in a room alone.
- Persons who are actively eating or drinking provided that they are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet away from persons who are not members of the same household or residence.
- Persons who are outdoors and maintaining at least 6 feet of social distancing from others not in their household. Such persons must have a face covering with them at all times and must put it on if they are within 6 feet of others who are not in their household.
- Persons who are obtaining a service involving the nose or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service.
- Workers who are required to wear respiratory protection.
- Persons who are specifically exempted from wearing face coverings by other CDPH guidance.

It is important to note that the following individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings at all times:

- Persons younger than two years old. These very young children must not wear a face covering because of the risk of suffocation.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance. Such conditions are rare.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

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- Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.

Note: Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

If you have concerns with the state guidance related to wearing a cloth face covering, you should work with your supervisor.

What is a cloth face covering?

A cloth face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It may be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It may be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. Acceptable cloth face covering options include, but are not limited to a bandana, scarf, neck gaiter, or homemade cloth cover.

A cloth face covering that no longer covers your nose or mouth; has stretched out or damaged ties or straps; cannot remain securely attached to your face; has holes or tears in the fabric; and/or obstructs your vision is not an effective face covering.

Surgical masks or N95 respirators are not recommended, unless required for specific job tasks or assignments.

How should I care for a cloth face covering?

Washing of your cloth face covering regularly is recommended, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to keep cloth face covering in until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face.

How well do cloth face coverings work to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

There is scientific evidence to suggest that use of cloth face coverings by the public during a pandemic could help reduce disease transmission. Their primary role is to reduce the release of infectious particles into the air when someone speaks, coughs, or sneezes, including someone who has COVID-19 but feels well. Cloth face coverings are not a substitute for physical distancing, washing hands, and staying home when ill, but they may be helpful when combined with these primary interventions.

What tools can I use to achieve physical distancing?

- Continue to use offices and cubicles that allow coworkers to be at least six feet apart. Common areas should be used sparingly; and, you 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.

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- Postpone or cancel all non-mandatory travel and trainings, such as conferences.
- Discuss temporary telework and flexible work schedules with your supervisor.

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](#).

You may also 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 CONCERNS

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

You may use available leave balances, excluding sick leave, if a qualifying family member's school or caregiver location is closed due to COVID-19 related reasons. You may also be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick Leave (see [EPSL below](#)). You may be assigned temporary telework or a flexible work schedule, if feasible, with the authorization of their supervisor/manager. However, once the school or childcare provider is closed for summer vacation, or any other reason that is not related to COVID-19, you cannot utilize EPSL for this purpose.

For leave options that may apply, see [Employee Leaves](#).

What should I do if I am at high risk?

You are expected to be available to report to work. In support of this expectation, if you are of higher risk with pre-existing conditions, you may request a reasonable accommodation to support your continued ability to work.

You should work with your supervisor to address your concerns. For leave options that may apply, see [Employee Leaves](#).

Who is at high risk?

Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, the [CDC](#) identifies older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions as being at higher risk of COVID-19 complications.

Who should quarantine for potential COVID-19 exposure?

If you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, the Placer County Public Health Officer has provided guidance that you should remain at home, or in a comparable setting, and practice physical distancing for 14 days after the last contact with a positive person. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should self-isolate. Under certain circumstances, a symptom-free critical infrastructure worker may be required to continue working with additional precautions.

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Close contact with someone who is infected is defined as being within about 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more; or, having unprotected direct contact with secretions (e.g., sneezed or coughed on).

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

- Have had a positive lab test for COVID-19;
- Have been informed by a physician that they are likely to have COVID-19;
- 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.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

- If you have symptoms prior to arriving at work, you should stay home and notify your supervisor.
- If you develop [symptoms](#) during the day, you should immediately separate yourself from other employees, customers, and visitors and go home. If you develop symptoms outside of work, you should notify your supervisor and stay home.
- You may consider seeking with a health care provider and/or get tested for COVID-19.
- If you have COVID-19 symptoms and are directed to care for yourself at home, you may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:
 - At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset; AND,
 - At least 1 day (24 hours) has passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms.
- If you are infected with COVID-19 and never develop symptoms, you may discontinue isolation and other precautions 10 days after the date of your first positive test.

EMPLOYEE LEAVES

I am unavailable to work for reasons including illness, caring for a sick family member, or school/daycare closures. How do I receive pay?

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

If you need time off work for a COVID-19 related reason you may also be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick Leave. For leave options that may apply, see 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 for a COVID-19 related reason, may be eligible for an additional 80 hours of sick

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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:

- Employee is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
- Health care provider has advised the employee to self-quarantine;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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);
- Employee is experiencing a substantially similar condition;

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

After completing distance learning, my children's school closed for summer vacation. May I take EPSL to care for my children because their school is closed for summer vacation?

No. EPSL is not available for this qualifying reason if the school or childcare provider is closed for summer vacation, or any other reason that is not related to COVID-19. However, you may be able to take leave if your child's care provider during the summer—a camp or other programs in which your child is enrolled—is closed or unavailable for a COVID-19 related reason. You would need to provide additional certification and supporting documentation to Human Resources prior to your supervisor approving EPSL time off.

What are the steps I should take to request EPSL?

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

You should not be applying any time for EPSL on your timesheets unless you have formally requested the benefit and it 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 do I know if EPSL has been approved?

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Once the completed form and documentation are received, Human Resources will determine your eligibility and notify you and your department if approved. If it is determined that you are eligible for the EPSL, you 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, your supervisor will review and approve individual requests to utilize the EPSL hours based on COVID-19 related reasons as listed [above](#).

Am I required to submit a new request form for every absence?

You are not required to complete additional certification forms for every EPSL request for time off following the initial approval. Instead, you will submit the request to utilize EPSL by selecting **“COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave”** in Workday. Your supervisor should only approve EPSL for qualifying COVID-19 related reasons as listed [above](#).

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

Can EPSL be taken intermittently?

EPSL **cannot** be taken intermittently unless you are taking time off to care for your 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
- You must work a minimum of 20 hours per week when taking intermittent time off
- You and your department should work together to develop a schedule for intermittent leave that allows you to take the leave when reasonable but still meets the needs of your department

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

EPSL hours will be paid at your full regular rate of pay.

What if I am 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 an initial 10-day period with unpaid benefits, after which you are entitled to paid leave at two-thirds (2/3) your regular rate of pay up to \$200 per day or \$10,000 total. You may utilize COVID-19 EPSL or other accrued leaves during the initial period and may supplement the 2/3 pay with your accrued leave balances (except sick leave) which will allow you to achieve 100% of your

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regular rate of pay. If you exhaust all accrued leave balances you may also be eligible to supplement with Unemployment Insurance administered by the State of California.

After completing distance learning, my children's school closed for summer vacation. May I take EFMLA to care for my children because their school is closed for summer vacation?

No. EFMLA is not available if the school or childcare provider is closed for summer vacation, or any other reason that is not related to COVID-19. However, you may be able to take leave if your child's care provider during the summer—a camp or other programs in which your child is enrolled—is closed or unavailable for a COVID-19 related reason. You would need to provide additional certification and supporting documentation to Human Resources prior to your supervisor approving EFMLA time off.

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 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 I should take to request the new EFMLA for school or daycare closures?

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

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

If you have contracted COVID-19, you may be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) and/or a protected leave of absence under the FMLA/CFRA and wage replacement such as State Disability Insurance, depending on your labor group.

What if I need to take time off work to care for an ill qualifying family member?

You may be eligible for the Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) and/or 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.

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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 your labor group.

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

If you exhaust available leave balances, unpaid hours (UPH) may be applied. If you have questions, you 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 suspended temporarily.

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

- Employees must be within 80 hours of the applicable vacation cap at the close of Pay Period 20 to be eligible to cash out.
- During this temporary change from Pay Period 21 through Pay Period 26, you can only cash out up to 80 hours and are limited to no more than two requests.
- A vacation cash out form should be completed for each request.
- 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 I be eligible to utilize?

Disability Insurance - Sick or Quarantined (PPEO employees)

If you are unable to work due to having or being exposed to COVID-19 (certified by a medical professional), you 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 you are unable to work because you are caring for an ill or quarantined family member with COVID-19 (certified by a medical professional), you 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

If your hours have been reduced due to COVID-19 related reasons, you can file an Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim. UI provides partial wage replacement benefit payments.

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If you have questions, you should contact Human Resources.

TELEWORK

How is an emergency telework assignment initiated?

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

What if I am impacted by closures of schools and other caregiving locations? Can I be assigned telework?

With authorization of supervisors/managers, there are several temporary options to address the impacts of school closures and other caregiving locations. These include intermittent time off, flexible work hours, alternate work schedules, and telework. You may also use available leave balances if a qualifying family member's school or caregiver location is closed for health-related reasons. As noted previously, needed time off may also be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick Leave or other leave options.

What if I am 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 emergency telework assignments?

1. Telework allows you to work from a remote site other than your primary work location. It does not change your employment status or number of hours worked.
2. You are expected to commit your concentration on work assignments to the same extent as when working in the office.
3. You and your supervisor should regularly document the specific work assignments and expected delivery dates. Unless prior alternate arrangements are made, due dates will be honored.
4. You should maintain productivity and support efforts to measure and monitor your performance.
5. You must be available by telephone and email during your scheduled work hours. If not immediately answered, calls forwarded from your primary work location must reach a professional voicemail message.
6. You must be able to physically report to your primary work location if directed to do so.
7. You 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.

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8. Telework is not intended to be a substitute for childcare or elder care. During this emergency period, you may need to request intermittent time off and/or flexible work hours to accommodate other responsibilities.
9. You 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?

- Test various work surfaces and chairs available at home.
- Complete "[Ergonomics – A Training Guide for Healthy Office Workers](#)" training.
- Discuss concerns with your supervisor to brainstorm alternatives.

Contact Joe Morgan, Risk Management Administrator in Human Resources, at (530) 886-2606 or jmorgan@placer.ca.gov.

TIME REPORTING

If I am working, how should I report time?

You should record time worked, whether on site or teleworking, according to your department's normal timekeeping guidance. If working on activities related to the COVID-19 emergency, you must code those hours to include the Grant Worktag GR00719. If you are an exempt employee, you must ensure that all hours worked beyond your 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.

How do I report EPSL leave on my timesheets?

If you were determined eligible and approved to receive the hours, 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 your regular sick leave accrual and you will submit a request to your supervisor for the time off, and the hours will be available for you to utilize as a Time Off on your timesheet for COVID-19 related reasons listed [above](#).

You should not be applying any time for EPSL on your timesheets unless you have formally requested the benefit and it 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).