

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

January 29, 2021

Thank you for reviewing the latest guidance on the COVID-19 emergency.

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 continue to manage and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within the workplace, these expectations and values should be our guiding principles as we serve the public.

STATE GUIDANCE

The County continues to evaluate onsite department operations to ensure they are 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 is to be worn 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 continually review 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 safe onsite operations.

TRAINING

Employee training to prevent COVID-19 is available through [Placer Learns](#). Training includes topics such as:

- 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 a cumulative 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period, or if someone with COVID-19 coughed on you, kissed you, shared utensils with you, or you had direct contact with their bodily 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. Screen yourself for coronavirus symptoms every day. 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 10-day quarantine period when not exhibiting symptoms. If you develop symptoms, you should not report to work until:
 - i. At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; AND,
 - ii. COVID-19 symptoms have improved; AND,
 - iii. At least 24 hours have passed since a fever of 100.4 or higher has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications.
 - iv. If not tested, you 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.
10. 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.

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 [Microsoft Teams Quick Start Guide](#).
- Postpone or cancel all non-critical meetings that cannot be completed virtually.
- Postpone or cancel all non-mandatory travel and trainings, such as conferences.
- Discuss temporary telework and flexible work schedules with your supervisor.

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 always wear face coverings 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 always wearing face coverings:

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- 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.
- 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.

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.

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

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distancing, washing hands, and staying home when ill, but they may be helpful when combined with these primary interventions.

What can I do if I am 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 be assigned temporary telework or a flexible work schedule, if feasible, with the authorization of their supervisor/manager.

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 an individual or member of your household who has tested positive for COVID-19 or is exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19, you should remain at home, or in a comparable setting, and practice physical distancing for 10 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 is defined as being within 6 feet of a person who has or likely to have COVID-19 for a cumulative 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period; or, having unprotected direct contact with bodily fluids (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 associated with 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 your shift, you should immediately separate yourself from other employees, customers, and visitors, notify your supervisor, and go home. If you develop symptoms outside of work, you should notify your supervisor and stay home.
- You may consider seeking advice from 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 first appeared; AND,
 - COVID-19 symptoms have improved; AND,
 - At least 24 hours have passed since a fever of 100.4 or higher has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- 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

What if I cannot work due to experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19, being diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been in close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual or a member of my household? How do I receive pay?

If you are off work due to experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19, being diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been in close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual or a member of your household, you will utilize available accrued leave balances such as sick leave, vacation, floating holiday, compensatory time earned (CTE), and management leave. If you exhaust available leave balances, unpaid hours (UPH) may be applied. You may also be eligible for protected leave of absence under the FMLA/CFRA and wage replacement such as

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State Disability Insurance, depending on your labor group. If you have questions, you should discuss the matter with your supervisor and/or contact Human Resources.

Is the Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) available for use?

No, pursuant to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), EPSL hours expired 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.

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

If you are requesting time off work due to care for a qualifying family member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, you will utilize available accrued leave balances such as sick leave, vacation, floating holiday, compensatory time earned (CTE), and management leave. If you exhaust available leave balances, unpaid hours (UPH) may be applied. You may also be eligible for 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 your labor group.

What if I am unable to work due to caring for an eligible child at home because of school or childcare closure?

If your eligible child's school or childcare is closed due to COVID-19 precautions, you will utilize available accrued leave balances except sick leave. If you exhaust available leave balances, unpaid hours (UPH) may be applied. In addition to utilizing accrued leave balances, wage replacement such as Unemployment Insurance administered by the State of California may be available.

Is the Expanded Family and Medical Leave Act (EFMLA) available for use?

No, pursuant to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), the Expanded Family and Medical Leave Act (EFMLA) expired on December 31, 2020.

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 eight weeks of benefit payments to eligible workers who have a full or

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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.

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, with the exception of sick leave, if a qualifying family member's school or caregiver location is closed for health-related reasons.

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.

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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.
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 Theresa Lannigan, Management Analyst in Human Resources, at (530) 886-2617 or tlannigan@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.