



COVID-19 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The answers provided in these FAQs supersede previous DOAS guidance posted 3/27/2020.

FAQs for the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) can be found at this Link: <http://doas.ga.gov/human-resources-administration/human-resources-administration-covid-19-response>

I. WORKPLACE PRECAUTIONS

1. What is the best data source to stay current with the most recent guidance on limiting the risk to employees, contractors, customers, and citizens?

COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and the CDC is providing updated information and guidance as it becomes available. The CDC is the best source for all COVID-19 information. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Additional information and resources are available on the DPH website at <https://dph.georgia.gov/>

For specific questions related to COVID-19, you may also call the DPH COVID-19 hotline: 1-844-442-2681.

2. Are there any immediate actions agencies should be taking to limit potential exposure in the workplace to COVID-19?

The CDC has extensive guidance for all businesses before, during and after an outbreak of disease to ensure the health and well-being of employees and to provide a safe workplace. Some of the measures to be considered include:

- **Have a plan or develop plans**
- **Cross-train personnel**
- **Monitor**
- **Develop guidelines**
- **Assess your essential functions**
- **Encourage sick employees to stay home**
- **Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene**
- **Reinforce healthy behaviors**
- **Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs**
- **Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles**
- **Routinely clean**
- **Provide disposable wipes**

More information is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

3. Is there general guidance available regarding recommended limitations on in-person meetings / gatherings in the workplace?

The CDC recommends exploring policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., teleworking, flexible work hours, and staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others. Ensure that you have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees who may be able to work from home. Use technology (teleconferences, webinars, video conferencing) for continuity of business operations, while increasing physical distance between employees and with outside partners and stakeholders.

Furthermore, in his Executive Order 03.21.20.01 Governor Brian P. Kemp ordered that no business, establishment, corporation, nonprofit corporation, or organization shall allow more than ten (10) persons to be gathered at a single location if such gathering requires persons to stand or be seated within six (6) feet of any other person.

More information is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

4. What protocol should be used to screen employees upon arrival at a state facility? Are there consistent guidelines for when and what screening is acceptable to utilize?

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has recently released guidance due to the community spread of COVID-19. See https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/wysk/wysk_ada_rehabilitaion_act_coronavirus.cfm

The EEOC guidance provides that an employer may inquire about whether an employee is exhibiting flu-like symptoms and may make inquiries of people who recently have been on trips where they may have been exposed to COVID-19.

While the EEOC generally considers measuring an employee's body temperature to be a medical examination, the new guidance provides that employers may measure employees' body temperature without violating the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) during this time. The EEOC cautions that employers should be aware that some people with COVID-19 do not have a fever.

Understand that notations of medical inquiries/screenings would likely be considered confidential medical information and would be subject to privacy protections.

II. TELEWORK

5. How are agencies to administer the teleworking instruction absent an emergency closure of state and/or agency operations?

Absent any subsequent emergency closure, agencies were instructed on March 12, 2020, by the Governor's Office to immediately implement telework options for staff able to telework without interruption to the performance of duties. Agencies should provide flexibility when appropriate.

Agencies should take steps to maximize telework options for as many employees as possible. For employees who do not ordinarily telework, ask supervisors to identify tasks that employees can do remotely.

As a temporary measure and as appropriate based on the current circumstances, state agencies should use work from home whenever practical to maintain business operations and continuity of service. This may require modifications to standard duties or exceptions to typical telework practices. Additionally, agencies are advised to modify (at least temporarily) their telework policies to allow employees to work remotely at the same time they are caring for a child or other dependent.

For employees who are unable to telework due to the nature of their duties, agencies should increase flexibility in schedules to reduce the number of employees onsite at any one time. Interpersonal contact at office locations are instructed to be minimized with the increase of web-based resources for public facing services. Agencies should maximize scheduled work hours and provide flexibility to employees who are teleworking during a self-isolation or quarantine should adhere to all applicable telework policies where possible, including the Statewide Telework Policy: <http://doas.ga.gov/human-resources-administration/board-rules-policy-and-compliance/jointly-issued-statewide-policies/state-telework-policy>.

6. How can agencies improve their ability to comply with the instruction for employees to telework if duties permit it?

Review and consider the following:

Review the Statewide Telework Policy <http://doas.ga.gov/human-resources-administration/board-rules-policy-and-compliance/jointly-issued-statewide-policies/state-telework-policy> (as a reminder the Statewide Telework Policy requires that agencies must establish an agency telework policy if allowing employees to telework).

Consider how your agency can maximize its teleworking capacity by identifying what positions are telework-eligible. Note it is within an agency's discretion to assign work and/or restructure jobs to allow an employee previously ineligible to be able to telework if appropriate.

Ensure your agency's information technology infrastructure can continue to support widespread remote usage of agency systems.

Ensure there are processes in place for communicating effectively with employees who are teleworking.

Identify meetings that can be held via conference call or video conferencing rather than in person.

7. What if there was not time to put a telework agreement into place with an employee who was newly identified as capable of teleworking?

The agency should require the employee to enter into a teleworking agreement and take telework training as soon as possible and where reasonable.

III. PAY/LEAVE STATUS

FAQs for the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) can be found at this Link:

<http://doas.ga.gov/human-resources-administration/human-resources-administration-covid-19-response>

8. What documentation should an agency require of an employee who reports that he or she needs to be self-isolated?

Agencies should decide as to whether the employee has provided sufficient information that he or she needs to be self-isolated. Managers/supervisors should use their best judgement and be mindful about the burden and impact of requiring medical documentation during this time. It is recommended that agencies relax requirements for documentation wherever possible.

9. Should an agency require a medical certification before allowing an employee to return to work after being quarantined or instructed to self-isolate?

An isolated or quarantined employee should not return to work until he or she no longer presents a risk of infection to the public as determined by the Isolation Protocol then in effect, as issued by DPH. This Isolation Protocol can be found on DPH's website.

An agency may require documentation, but the CDC has recommended that employers should not require such medical documentation in order to not overwhelm the health system and given such documentation may not be able to be provided timely by the health provider.

10. How do I code administrative leave for non-temporary, non-salaried, hourly employees?

TeamWorks Time & Labor Users: SAO has activated a time reporting code, specifically ADMH, that will allow employees, supervisors and Time & Labor administrators to submit and approve administrative leave for non-temporary, non-salaried, hourly employees. This code is effective for the pay period beginning March 16, 2020. Specific instructions related to this new code is forthcoming and will be sent to all Time & Labor customers.

For Base Benefits and Absence Management: SAO will activate a new earnings code, ADM, for Administrative Time. This will allow agencies to record time for non-temporary, non-salaried, hourly employees that is considered "Administrative." This new code will be

available by March 27, 2020, but effective for time input for the pay period beginning March 16, 2020. Additional information on the new earnings code will be sent to all Base Benefits and Absence Management customers.

11. How will employee absences be handled if the state offices are closed or partially closed due to a risk of infection?

If the Governor or an Agency Head closes an agency or building, employees with the ability to telework will be compensated normally for time teleworking. Affected employees (those previously scheduled to work during the time that offices are now closed) who are not able to telework may be excused from duty during an emergency closure for as long as necessary without a loss in pay.

Note: Some employees may be required to work as essential staff during a closure. These employees should be compensated as usual for regularly scheduled hours and will not accrue any right to additional absence.

Temporary employees will be placed on authorized leave without pay during a closure of state or agency operations absent an instruction and ability to telework.

12. Can Education Support Leave be utilized for employees with children at home due to school closures?

Agencies may consider allowing non-temporary, full-time employees to utilize the 8 hours of Education Support Leave available each calendar year for time directly engaged in remote learning activities. Under State Personnel Board Rule 16, Section (18), each agency maintains the authority to determine whether an activity would qualify for Education Support Leave under the Rule.

13. What options do agencies have regarding leave donation programs?

Agencies are permitted to establish leave donation programs to enable employees to voluntarily donate accrued leave to other eligible employees of the same agency who have exhausted all paid leave pursuant to the terms contained in State Personnel Board Rule 17.

This Rule provides that donated leave may be used only for sick leave and only for purposes related to a medical hardship which is defined as “a medical condition of an employee or the employee’s immediate family member that will require the employee’s extended absence and will result in a substantial loss of income to the employee.” An employee must be on a period of authorized leave without pay for forty (40) consecutive hours to be eligible for donated leave.

14. Where can I find resources if I would like to see other agency examples of teleworking or donated leave policies?

Sample policies are compiled on the DOAS website: <https://us5.campaign-archive.com/?e=%5bUNIQID%5d&u=5b9f6808fa4e1caeb54cbac36&id=0bc568a3bb>

IV. ELIGIBILITY FOR WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS

15. Will employees previously exposed to a coworker who tests positive for COVID-19 that later become ill be able to seek workers compensation benefits?

As with any injury, in the event an employee notifies you of a suspected workers' compensation injury due to COVID-19, Risk Management Services (RMS) recommends the case be reported in the same manner you would any other workers' compensation case. Call the claim into the claim intake vendor using the **1-877-656-7475**.

16. What can be expected once a report of a workers' compensation claim related to COVID-19 is reported to the Intake vendor?

An adjuster will be assigned and will contact the employee to begin the necessary review to determine if the event is related to his/her employment and covered by the workers' compensation laws.

17. Are there any specific differences in how an employee's potential claim based on COVID-19 will be adjusted versus a typical occupational injury claim?

Georgia's Workers' Compensation Act provides compensation for occupational diseases. An occupational disease must "arise out of and in the course of" a job. But establishing an occupational disease also requires meeting a higher burden of proof that will be assessed by the Workers' Compensation claims adjuster.

18. Are there additional considerations that an adjuster will need to make when investigating an occupational disease claim?

Once eligibility is established, the employee is entitled to medical care and treatment that is reasonably required and appears likely to effect a cure, give relief, or restore suitable employment.

V. ELIGIBILITY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

19. Is there information available for agencies to better understand what employees are eligible for the partial unemployment claims that are now mandatory for agencies to file on behalf of eligible employees? Are part-time employees eligible for any type of unemployment benefits?

GDOL has issued an emergency Rule 300-2-4-0.8-.09(1)(d) to govern the payment of Unemployment Insurance claims filed during this period of Public Health Emergency. Currently, employers are mandated to file Partial Unemployment Insurance claims when employee hours are temporarily reduced, and the employee is expected to return to work after the emergency expires. Part time employees are also covered by this emergency rule. Any employer found to be in violation of this rule will be required to reimburse GDOL for the full amount of unemployment insurance benefits paid to the employee.

Filing partial claims results in employees receiving unemployment insurance (UI) benefit payments faster, usually within 48 hours for claims filed electronically. Employees for whom you file a partial claim are NOT required to report to a Georgia Department of Labor career center, register for employment services, or to look for other work during this health emergency. Please note that employees should not seek in-person services from a career center at this time, as all career centers are closed to the public.

Please be sure to check the GDOL website frequently, as rules may continue to be updated as necessary to comply with changing federal and/or state requirements.

<https://dol.georgia.gov/>

VI. EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

20. To what extent can we share information about a confirmed COVID-19 case among one or more employees?

It is important to protect the infected employee's privacy to the greatest extent possible; therefore his or her identity should not be disclosed and management should only share the information determined to be necessary to protect the health of the employees in the workplace while maintaining confidentiality as required under the Health and Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other applicable laws. Agency HR should consult with agency legal counsel to determine what information is releasable.

An agency may request an employee's consent for sharing information related to that employee's diagnosis. If distancing, information sharing, or other precautions can be taken to reduce the spread of infection without disclosing information related to a specific employee, that approach should be taken.

21. What considerations should an agency keep in mind if an employee requests to telework or otherwise stay home due to an underlying condition that would place him or her at a higher risk if exposed to COVID-19 or concern that they may be particularly vulnerable?

Agencies should be flexible and take steps to maximize telework options for as many employees as possible. For employees who do not ordinarily telework, agencies should identify tasks that employees can do remotely.

For those employees who cannot telework, agencies should be flexible with leave requests (annual, sick, or leave without pay) and should recognize that such a request may constitute a request for a reasonable accommodation under the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Note: Any employee ordered to isolate or quarantine by Administrative Order of the Georgia Department of Public Health should be placed on administrative/emergency leave.

22. What resources are available for an agency to provide employees that are expressing mental stress and fear regarding COVID-19 and coming to work?

Review any resources available from any Employee Assistance Program the agency offers to its employees. It is also recommended to communicate with employees regarding any efforts agencies are taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

If the agency participates in the statewide Employee Assistance Program offered by the Department of Administrative Services, the vendor KEPRO has the following resources available to employees:

- Counseling to address increased anxiety and stress related to COVID-19.
- Additional resources are accessible via the EAP website. Click on the following link for more information on how to access the EAP: <http://doas.ga.gov/human-resources-administration/employee-benefits-information/employee-assistance-program>.

After logging into the site, enter “COVID” into the search box for more information.

VII. BUSINESS OPERATIONS/CONTINUITY

23. What can TeamWorks HCM agencies be doing to ensure payroll continuity if offices are closed?

Agency HR and payroll staff need to perform transactions and validation functions as they would during a normal pay cycle. All TeamWorks payroll functions can be performed from anywhere and at any time via the TeamWorks web-based portal with attention to the published payroll confirm deadline dates located on the SAO website.

24. How does the system process Payroll for full-time salaried staff with NO changes?

The TeamWorks system will automatically process payroll, thus reducing transaction efforts to only those that are essential is suggested. (i.e. Only hire with start dates of the 1st or 16th of the month, do not adjust pay, don't “fix” things that can be fixed later.)

25. How does the system process Payroll for full-time salaried staff with changes?

Manual transactions are only necessary when job data changes take place (hire, termination, change in pay, position change, etc.) or there are changes to pay outside of the normal compensation for the pay period. If job/payroll data changes are needed, your human resources and payroll staff should be able to do those from anywhere at any time prior to the published payroll confirm deadline date for which the change needs to be effective.

26. How does the system process Payroll for hourly staff?

Ensure time is entered into the system by published payroll confirm deadline dates. This process will depend on the type of time keeping system you currently operate (paper,

Kronos, Time & Labor or other). For those on TeamWorks Time & Labor, the time entered by the employee and approved by the manager (or administrator) will automatically feed the payroll system if approved and processed prior to the published payroll confirm deadline date.

27. How does the system process Off-Cycle Checks and Paper Checks?

Agencies are encouraged to reduce or omit any off-cycle check processing during this time.

For individuals receiving paper checks, it is encouraged to have employee's sign-up for direct deposit to receive compensation more quickly. They can do this in the system under Employee Self-Service. (As a reminder, by law an agency cannot force an employee to sign-up for direct deposit. However, an agency may specify it as part of an offer of employment letter as a condition which the employee is accepting.

Note: *New direct deposit requests will take at least one payroll cycle to allow time for the bank to validate the routing number and account.*

- *Advise employees to keep their mailing address up to date. They can do this in the system under Employee Self-Service.*
- *Effective Monday, March 23rd, all paper checks are being mailed on pay day directly to the employee's mailing address on file in the TeamWorks system UNLESS the agency contacted the Xerox Print Production Center with different instructions.*

28. Should agencies be tracking certain data elements regarding their workforces during this time? (e.g. how many hours are teleworked, how many hours of related overtime, how many employees on related approved leave or leave without pay).

Yes. The state's Time and Labor system allows for the proper accounting of employee schedules and types of hours work and/or paid leave approved. Agencies are responsible for reviewing and validating employees' timesheets. This includes properly accounting for the type of hours worked including paid leave and the various reasoning codes. For agencies not on the state's Time and Labor system, the appropriate steps should be taken to account for the various work schedules and types of hours worked. Additionally, agencies should be tracking their vital productivity measures to allow for additional review and analysis for future planning and adjustments to policies, procedures, and regulations.

HR Professionals may contact the HRA Help Desk at 404-656-2705 or 1-877-318-2772 or the DOAS HRA Policy and Compliance Team at hrapolicy@doas.ga.gov with any questions.