



DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL & SHARED SERVICES
Office of Employee Services
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HR, Director

County of Sussex

Memorandum

March 17, 2020

Re: Guidelines for County Employees Leave Time and Staffing - COVID-19

The health and well-being of our employees is of primary concern to the County of Sussex. It is equally important to address the continued County services to our residents during this time of COVID-19 concern. As the situation is fluid and circumstances changing rapidly, we are aware that our operations may need to provide flexibility and require greater latitude for leave time procedures in order to prevent spread of the virus. Priority should be given to each individual employee's health as well as the health of their immediate family members. Please practice safety and take necessary precautions. The CDC issued a document "Keeping the Workplace Safe" which recommends practicing good hygiene, being careful with meetings and traveling, handling food carefully and staying home if feeling sick or if a family member is sick.

Governor Phil Murphy issued an Executive Order 103, which authorizes and empowers the NJ Civil Service Commission (CSC) to promulgate rules and to waive, suspend, or modify any existing rule where its enforcement would be detrimental to the public welfare. Executive Order 103 specifically authorizes the Commission to take appropriate steps to address the public health hazard COVID-19, with the approval of Governor Murphy's issued guidelines. The Executive Order 103 issued by Governor Phil Murphy pertains to state employees only; however, the County wishes to take some proactive steps.

The County of Sussex is providing guidelines to address the following;

Alterations to Existing Work Arrangements

In accordance with the Executive Order 103, Appointing Authorities are permitted to implement or modify flextime or alternative workweek programs and may adjust established hours of daily or shift operations without the need of prior approval from CSC.

At this time, the County of Sussex is prepared to make the appropriate modifications to workweek schedules and may adjust established hours of daily or shift operations as need or changing circumstances require.

Please communicate directly with your Division and Department heads who will develop guidance that will be provided to all affected employees.

Leave Procedures

Illness Directly Affecting Employees

In an effort to keep everyone as safe as possible, employees who have been exposed to or diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus will not be permitted to enter the workplace (all County locations) until they are medically cleared (those with COVID-19) or until the expiration of the recommended 14-day period of quarantine from the point of last exposure (only for those exposed to COVID-19).

If an employee is: 1). medically diagnosed with COVID-19, or 2). Directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine due to suspicion of exposure to or diagnosis with COVID-19, and /or 3). Undergoing a period of self-quarantine or isolation pursuant to public health assessment recommendations, the employee will not be required to utilize accumulated leave time for their absence if they provide the documentation verifying the COVID-19 diagnosis, suspicion or recommendation to self-isolate or quarantine as soon as reasonably practical. Please notify the County immediately if you fall into any of the mentioned categories so that the County can take immediate steps to assess the risk of spread.

Any documentation the employee may have related to COVID-19 should be provided to the Office of Employee Services only to ensure confidentiality under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). If an employee does not provide the required documentation to Employee Services, then the employee will be required to utilize their own benefit leave time to cover the period of absence.

Illness Affecting the Family of an Employee

If the employee is absent due to the employees need to care for an immediate family member as defined by County policy, who: 1). has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or 2). was directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine due to the suspicion of exposure to or diagnosis with COVID-19 and/or 3). Is undergoing a period of self-quarantine or isolation pursuant to public health assessment recommendations, the employee will not be required to utilize accumulated leave time for their absence if they provide the documentation verifying the COVID-19 diagnosis, suspicion or recommendation to self-isolate or quarantine as soon as reasonably practical.

Any documentation the employee may have related to COVID-19 should be provided to the Office of Employee Services only to ensure confidentiality under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). If an employee does not provide the required documentation to Employee Services, then the employee will be required to utilize their own benefit leave time to cover the period of absence.

School Closures

On March 14, 2020 a communication was distributed by the County Administrator addressing school closures (refer the attached communication). The March 14th communication is updated to amend sick leave to “*accumulated time*” as per the CSC guidance. The County Administrator has also determined the employees in these additional Divisions are essential: Social Services Administration and the Office of Transit.

Staffing

The County is reviewing the current Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP), including lists of employees designated as essential. In the event of a partial or full closure of operations, essential employees will be notified regarding whether they are required to report to work. If essential employees are required to report to work, they will be paid in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement and/or County policy.

Requests for work from home will be reviewed with the current COOP to determine if work from home can be accommodated for both essential and non-essential employees during the period of outbreak. Each Division and Department Head will prepare their employee lists and review with the Appointing Authority.

In the event of staffing shortages that disrupt the usual delivery of local government services due to the diagnosis and/or necessity of quarantine, it may be necessary for the Appointing Authority to reassign essential work duties to ensure continuity of operations. The temporary assignment of out of title work is permissible pursuant to the appropriate collective bargaining agreement, County employee handbook and N.J.A.C 4A:3-3.4.

Required Medical Documentation

For cases of isolation or quarantine under the circumstances described in this document, documentation from a local, state, or federal government agency, a medical professional, office or hospital or proof that the employee was recently in a location where the recommendation by a government agency is to self-quarantine will satisfy the requirement to provide documentation. Additional documentation may be requested by Employee Services.

For cases where individuals are caring for a family member sickened by or diagnosed with COVID-19, then the employee shall submit documentation verifying the family members COVID-19 diagnosis.

All forms of documentation should be provided to the Office of Employee Services as this office is tasked with receiving sick or NJFLA – FMLA leave documentation. Please submit documentation by email at employeeservices@sussex.nj.us.