

# County of Monterey

## Employee COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

The below questions have been developed for the purposes of supporting the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual. The HR Point Person referenced in these questions refers to the Director of Human Resources, Irma Ramirez-Bough and Senior Personnel Analyst, Ariana Hurtado. Questions directed toward the HR Point Person referenced should be forwarded to [HRDAdmin@co.monterey.ca.us](mailto:HRDAdmin@co.monterey.ca.us).

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## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **1) How should I protect myself in the workplace?**

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently any objects and surfaces that are touched.
- Get a flu shot if you haven't already gotten one this season.

### **2) Will I be asked to serve as Disaster Service Workers?**

As you know, all County employees are designated by State law as Disaster Service Workers (DSWs) and upon hire, County employees signed an oath confirming their understanding that they are designated as DSWs. This means that when the County declares a local emergency, you may be deployed to different work sites or be asked to perform work duties or tasks that are different from your regular work responsibilities. No one will be assigned duties they are not qualified or trained to perform.

### **3) If I fall into a group considered at higher risk from severe illness from COVID 19 should I report to work?**

People over the age of 65 and people with serious underlying medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease, and those with immunosuppressed systems are considered at high risk from severe illness from COVID 19. The federal guidance is employee stay at home. Explore options with management regarding telecommute.

### **4) What should I do if I develop flu-like symptoms?**

If you feel like you have flu-like symptoms you should let your supervisor know and call your health care provider prior to arriving at their office. Do not go to the hospital emergency department unless your healthcare provider directs you to go. We need to reserve emergency room visits for serious illness and medical emergencies.

If you have symptoms of acute respiratory illness and are feeling sick do not come to work. Notify your supervisor and stay home. You may be eligible for special paid leave (paid at base rate of pay) under the provisions of the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual (Section 10). The 80 hours of paid special leave shall be pro-rated for less than full-time employees based on their FTE.

### **5) If my doctor's office is not available for an appointment, what other alternatives or resources are available?**

Employees with CalPERS health plans should refer to their Medical ID card for Nurse Line 24/7 TeleMed information. Refer to the Emergency Response Manual or the Employee Benefits website for more information.

### **6) Can my Department require me to stay home if I have symptoms of the COVID-19?**

Yes. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states that employees who become ill with symptoms of COVID-19 should leave the workplace and stay at home.

### **7) Can my department send me home if I am experiencing flu-like symptoms?**

Yes, your department can require you to go home if you are showing symptoms such as fever, coughing, and/or shortness of breath. Under the California Occupational Safety and Health Act (Cal-OSHA),

employers are required to maintain safe and healthy working conditions for employees. You may be eligible for special paid leave (paid at base rate of pay) under the provisions of the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual (Section 10). The 80 hours of paid special leave shall be pro-rated for less than full-time employees based on their FTE.

**8) If I am sent home because I am sick, when can I come back to work?**

You can return to work if you are no longer sick. According to Section 15 of the Human Resources Response Manual, when you are ready to return to work you should contact your supervisor for instructions on when and where you should return for your assignment. In certain circumstances, the County may require a note from your health care provider clearing you to return to work. If you were diagnosed with COVID-19, and the County designated the leave as FMLA/CFRA leave, the County will accept your treating physician's certification that you can return to work.

**9) Am I able to call in sick without doctor's note?**

Yes, in accordance with Section 15 of the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual you can call in sick without needing to a doctor's note during this pandemic event.

**10) If my doctor provides a note that I am to be quarantined, is this sufficient notification for my department?**

No, only the County Health Officer or authorized state/federal official can provide a quarantine notification. The County Health Officer or designee will notify Human Resources if any of its employees have tested positive for COVID-19, and a worksite has been deemed to have been potentially exposed or are considered a Person Under Investigation. However, you may still be asked by your Department Head or designee to telecommute/work from home or be "excused" if no telecommute/work from home options are available.

**11) If I am sick or showing flu-like symptoms what time off should I use?**

During this pandemic event, if you are sick you should remain home from work, you may be eligible for special paid leave (paid at base rate of pay) under the provisions of the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual (Section 10) or you can elect to use leave accruals, unless authorized to work from home. The 80 hours of paid special leave shall be pro-rated for less than full-time employees based on their FTE.

**12) What leave am I eligible to receive if I am diagnosed with the Coronavirus?**

You will qualify for FMLA/CFRA leave because the condition constitutes a "serious health condition". In addition, you may be eligible to receive the special paid leave (paid at base rate of pay) under the provisions of the Human Resources Emergency Services Manual. The 80 hours of paid special leave shall be pro-rated for less than full-time employees based on their FTE.

**13) If I have to stay home to care for a family member who is sick or showing symptoms what time off can I use?**

Please discuss with your supervisor if temporary telecommuting/working from home or a flexible work schedule is an option based on your duties. You are eligible to use your leave accruals and may be eligible to receive up to eighty (80) hours of special paid leave (paid at base rate of pay) under the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual (Section 10). The 80 hours of paid special leave shall be pro-rated for less than full-time employees based on their FTE.

**14) I feel fine but I have been placed on quarantine by the County Health Officer or other government authority and am to stay home. Do I use my accrued sick leave to cover the absence?**

Check with your supervisor about telecommute/work from home options. If none are available, under the

provisions found in the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual (Section 10) you may be eligible to receive up to eighty (80) hours of special paid leave (paid at base rate of pay) when quarantined by the County Health Officer or other government authority due to the Pandemic event. The 80 hours of paid special leave shall be pro-rated for less than full-time employees based on their FTE.

**15) Who is eligible for Special Paid Leave hours?**

Regular, probationary and temporary employees who are quarantined by the County Public Health Officer or authorized State or federal official due to the Pandemic event, sick or with the Pandemic event symptoms, or excused by the appointing authority and unable to temporarily telecommute/work from home will be eligible for special paid leave hours. The 80 hours of special paid leave shall be pro-rated for less than full-time employees based on their FTE.

**16) If my department head designates my job as a mission critical function and I work during the pandemic event, and I get sick after the county has returned to normal operations am I still eligible to use the Special Paid Leave hours?**

Special paid leave hours provided under the provisions of the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual (Section 10) will be available until the expiration date of the emergency declaration.

**17) If I am already out on an approved Leave of Absence (LOA) am I eligible for the Special Leave hours?**

Employees already out on an approved Leave of Absence would not be eligible for special paid leave hours and would continue to integrate their regular leave accruals as usual.

**18) If I am sick or caring for a sick family member and I have run out of leave balances, can I get an advance on my leave hours?**

Under the provisions found in Section 10 of the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual you may be eligible for up to 80 hours of special paid leave (paid at base rate of pay). The 80 hours of paid special leave shall be pro-rated for less than full-time employees based on their FTE. In addition, the County's Personnel Policies & Practices Resolution provides the County Administrative Officer authority to grant up to 20 days of paid administrative leave. Also, you can apply to the County's Donated Leave Bank for leave hours. Please contact the Human Resources Benefits Division at [BenefitsHelp@co.monterey.ca.us](mailto:BenefitsHelp@co.monterey.ca.us) for additional information.

**19) Can employees request to work from home during this Pandemic event?**

Under Section 7 of the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual employees can make reasonable requests to temporarily telecommute/work from home, but the approval is at the discretion of the appointing authority. The Temporary Telecommuting Request form is located on the Human Resources Department website at: <https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/human-resources>.

**20) What if I am the primary caregiver for my child and the school/daycare has been shut down?**

If you are a First Responder, you must report to work during this Pandemic event. First Responders are defined as Mission Critical and include law enforcement, emergency communications, emergency service officials and healthcare personnel. In the event that child and dependent care coverage may become impossible, arrangements may be made in advance for approval from the appointing authority to telecommute, if appropriate. If telecommuting is not appropriate upon approval, mission critical personnel will use accrued leave. Otherwise, mission critical employees must report to work.

Mission Critical personnel provide for and maintain the critical functions of the County including human resources, payroll, finance. In the event that child and dependent care coverage may become impossible,

arrangements may be made in advance for approval from the appointing authority to telecommute, if appropriate. If telecommuting is not appropriate upon approval, mission critical personnel will use accrued leave. Otherwise, mission critical employees must report to work.

Non-Mission Critical- In the event that non-mission critical personnel have exhausted their options for child and dependent care coverage accrued leave will be used for such an approved absence.

Please refer to Section 17: Closure of School and Daycare Facilities of the Human Resources Emergency Response Manual for further details. You may also consult with your Human Resources staff to inquire about potential daycare options available to County employees.

**21) Can I file a worker's compensation claim if I am sent home from work?**

Illnesses associated with a Pandemic are not considered work related. Employees may not be denied the right to file a worker's comp claim, however, the claim may be denied by the carrier.

**22) If I am working from home and incur an injury, can I file a worker's compensation claim?**

Work related injuries are to be reported and processed as usual. Contact your departmental HR Analyst or your supervisor for information.

**23) If I am classified as Non-Mission Critical Personnel, and sent home with no duties to perform, am I eligible for Unemployment Insurance?**

Employees are encouraged to check the EDD website for information regarding Unemployment Insurance claims and filing processes.

**24) If I have COVID-19, can I apply for State Disability Insurance or other disability insurance?**

Employees with serious illness including COVID-19 are encouraged to apply for disability benefits. During the pandemic event the State has reduced the waiting period for SDI benefits so please contact your benefits coordinator promptly for assistance.

**25) Will I be paid?**

Employees will continue to be paid bi-weekly on established pay dates. All employees enrolled in direct deposit will receive their pay electronically. Your pay statement can be viewed and printed out using ESS (Employee Self-Service) using [employee-center.co.monterey.ca.us](https://employee-center.co.monterey.ca.us)

**26) How can I enroll/change/update my direct deposit account from home?**

Direct Deposit changes can be made using the following options:

- Log into ESS Employee Self Service using [employee-center.co.monterey.ca.us](https://employee-center.co.monterey.ca.us)
- Mail to Auditor-Controller Payroll, P.O. Box 390, Salinas 93902
- Fax to 831-755-5144.

**27) I normally receive a paper payroll check, where do I pick it up?**

Those employees that still receive a paper check should contact their department timekeeper for check pickup information. Especially during this pandemic event we strongly urge employees to enroll in direct deposit to ensure that you receive your pay electronically and not have to physically pick up a check and then travel to the bank. Please see direct deposit question above for more information on how to enroll.

**28) Do Special Paid Leave hours count towards overtime?**

No, Special paid leave hours do not count towards overtime.

**29) Do essential employees receive any additional compensation or hours for working through the pandemic event?**

Employees deemed essential to departmental operations will receive their normal pay and benefits.

**30) Do I need to code my timesheet differently during the pandemic event?**

Your departmental timekeeper will provide time entry instructions specific for your department operations (this could include pay and leave usage codes, override codes, etc.) All time entry questions should be directed to your supervisor and/or departmental timekeeper.

**31) If I have questions and concerns about my deferred compensation plan, who do I call?**

Contact the County's local Nationwide representative, Justin Bryant at 831-200-5501 or [Justin.Bryant@Nationwide.com](mailto:Justin.Bryant@Nationwide.com).

Employees can also schedule a virtual appointment at <https://montereycounty457.myretirementappt.com/>. This is an excellent opportunity to be sure beneficiary designations are up to date.

**32) How can I use my FSA card for incurred expenses?**

The FSA card can be used for doctor prescribed items, medical supplies and equipment. Check out the FSA Store at <https://FSAstore.com>.

**33) If I am on a modified duty and my position is classified as essential, can my position be changed to non-essential due to my work restrictions?**

No, your position cannot be deemed non-essential based only on your medial work restrictions.

**34) How much information can my department request from me if I call in sick during a pandemic?**

The County may ask you if you are experiencing symptoms of the pandemic virus. Symptoms compatible with COVID-19 include subjective or measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing according to CDC. The County will maintain all information about an employee's illness as a confidential medical record in compliance with the ADA.

**35) Can my Department take my temperature during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Yes, your department may require your temperature be taken. The federal government has authorized employers the ability to take employees' temperatures to control community spread of COVID-19.

**36) May the County delay the start date of an applicant who has COVID-19 or symptoms?**

Yes, the County can delay the start date according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidance.

**37) Who is considered a close contact?**

A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of a COVID 19 case for a prolonged period of time which may occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID 19 case OR having direct contact with infections secretions of a COVID 19 case. If this applies, HR Department Point of Contact will contact Public Health at 831-755-4521 for guidance. Recommendation may be that close contact should go home for 14 days from last date of contact with COVID 19 case and self-monitor.

**38) I came into contact with someone who was in contact with a COVID 19 case. What should I do?**

See above for definition of Close Contact. HR Department Point of Contact will contact Public Health at 831-755-4521 for guidance.



**39) I just returned from a Cruise. Should I report to work or stay home?**

Cruise ships are classified as level 3 as of March 17 per CDC. If you were on a cruise in the past 14 days: Stay home for 14 days from the time you disembark, practice social distancing, and monitor your health. Social distancing means staying out of crowded places, avoiding group gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.

**40) I just returned from travelling abroad, should I report to work or stay home?**

Please check the following link for current CDC guidelines on Travelers returning to the USA.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

**41) What to do if you are sick after travel?**

Please do not report to work. Stay home and call your healthcare provider before arriving at their office.

**42) What should I do if there is a positive COVID 19 case in the workplace?**

Public Health will contact County HR Department point of contact if there is a positive case in the workplace and provide guidance on what actions need to be taken.

**43) When can an employee who was a COVID 19 case return to work?**

HR Department Point of Contact will contact Public Health at 831-755-4521 for guidance as it differs on whether employee is a healthcare employee or not.

**44) When can an employee who was a close contact to a COVID 19 case return to work?**

HR Department Point of Contact will contact Public Health at 831-755-4521 for guidance as it differs on whether employee is a healthcare employee or not.