



BUREAU OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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MEMORANDUM

To: Employees in Offices Under the President and Offices Governed by the Cook County Personnel Rules or the Cook County Employment Plan

From: Velisha L. Haddox 
Bureau Chief of Human Resources

Re: Employee Work Plan and Personnel Policy Addendum Related to COVID-19 Response

Date: March 16, 2020

Dear Employees:

As you are aware from the weekly communication issued by the Office of the President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, the County has worked diligently to keep employees safe during the COVID-19 crisis. We have continued County operations, while maintaining a healthy work environment through efforts such as:

- encouraging employees to follow guidelines issued by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Cook County Department of Public Health;
- reminding employees in high-risk categories to apply for FMLA or an ADA accommodation, if necessary;
- requiring employees who returned from CDC designated Level 3 Warning countries to self-isolate;
- reducing the Board and Committee meeting schedule for March and April; and
- reducing the County's work-related travel policy.

As this crisis continues to unfold and more information becomes available, the County will continue to take necessary precautions to protect its residents and the employees who serve them. At this juncture, the County will heighten its efforts to protect employees and residents from the spread of COVID-19 while remaining operational without interruption to essential County services to the extent possible.

Effective March 18, 2020 through March 30, 2020, the County will limit public access to the County Building and reduce the number of employees required to work on-site. These temporary changes will include reducing schedules, requiring some employees to continue to work on-site, and directing others to work remotely. All employees will continue to be paid during this period. Employees will receive further direction from Department Heads and Bureau Chiefs prior to the effective date.

While on-site at work, off-site, or working remotely, employees should engage in efforts to practice social distancing to prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. Informed by public health guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the following guidelines and information to help employees practice social distancing.

1. Stay home when you are sick, and cover coughs and sneezes. Additionally, the Bureau of Human Resources has issued specific instructions for employees who may be at a higher risk of coming into contact with COVID-19. Before returning to work, employees and on-site vendors should contact their immediate supervisor or contract administrator and healthcare provider if they have:

- a. returned from any country with a CDC Travel Alert Level 3 in the last 14 days, including China, Iran, South Korea, and many countries in Europe;
- b. live with or have had close contact with a Person Under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19 illness; or
- c. had close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 illness.

Per CDC guidance, all travelers returning from a country with a CDC Travel Alert Level 3 should self-isolate and limit activities for 14 days after travel. This includes people who do not have symptoms of illness.

2. Avoid in-person meetings when possible. Instead, consider using email, phone, or online conferencing tools like Microsoft Teams.

3. Keep unavoidable in-person meetings short. Hold unavoidable in-person meetings in large spaces where people can sit at least three feet apart from each other.

4. Eliminate unnecessary travel and cancel or postpone nonessential meetings, gatherings, workshops, and training sessions. Given the uncertainty around COVID-19, do not begin any new, nonessential initiatives at this time. All employees are expected to follow Executive Order 2020-2, which cancels and prohibit all work-related travel by County employees for conferences, continuing education, seminars, and lobbying activities that occur outside of the County through May 1, unless such travel is deemed essential by the employee's department head, bureau chief or by the controlling elected or agency official.

5. Keep six feet apart from other people when possible. Do not congregate in work rooms, pantries, copier rooms or other areas. Try to avoid being in crowded elevators or crowded spaces.

6. Avoid shaking hands, hugging, or other personal contact with coworkers, friends, and acquaintances. Some colleagues now bump elbows or bow instead.

7. While at work, bring lunch and eat at your desk or away from others when possible.

These social distancing guidelines should be considered while at work, if you are working remotely or if you are home and not at work during this crisis.

Consistent with the County's current practice during this crisis, the Bureau of Human Resources hereby implements the attached Personnel Policy Addendum Related to COVID-19 Response. This policy is effective today, March 16, 2020 and is located in the Policy Library.

Please await further direction from your department and contact BHR with questions regarding this policy.