

- 1) **Communicating with Employees & Their Families:** The Personnel Department will communicate with accuracy, timeliness, and solidarity expectations of employees and what is expected of them during a pandemic outbreak. Conditions can change quickly. We will use various forms of communication to keep employees and their family members informed including but not limited to: email, text messaging, payroll staffers, the County website, County & Personnel Facebook and other forms of social media. We will use reliable sources from national, state and local authorities to help inform, educate, and advise employees on an ongoing basis with updates in regard to a pandemic outbreak. Department Heads must get current phone numbers for each employee and their emergency contact info.
- 2) **Media:** All communication to the media regarding the public will be sent from the EMA Office or Commission Chairman's office. Members of the media might try to contact directors, supervisors, and/or employees. It is important that employees know who the media contact is for Houston County so they can refer media members to the correct person. Let your employees know who that contact is for your work unit.
- 3) **Protecting Employees:** Houston County will set and model the expectation that sick employees must stay home. Although reliable attendance at work is a standard business expectation, a pandemic challenges this norm. Ensuring that sick employees stay home will be the most powerful and immediate action each of us can take to protect our employees and ensure ill ones can fully recover and return to work as quickly as possible. Ongoing communication from Personnel or The Commission to employees will instruct employees to stay home if they are experiencing symptoms or having to care for sick family members (without fear of losing their job) and instruct them on what to do as well as communicate other important information and updates regarding the Coronavirus.
- 4) **Travel Restrictions:** No business travel. No changes at this time have been made to leave policies, if you chose to travel, you must self quarantine. Employees or anyone in their household who have traveled for personal or business reasons internationally or outside of the states of Alabama, Georgia or Florida must self quarantine for 14 days before returning to work to be taken from the employees' accrued time.
- 5) **Sick employees will be sent home:** Employees with influenza-like symptoms (coughing, sneezing, extreme fatigue, and fever) are likely contagious. Because influenza strikes so quickly, employees may wake up feeling well and arrive at the workplace with symptoms or develop them during the day. In these situations, immediately separate employees from other employees until they can arrange to get home. It is both permissible and legal to instruct workers who appear to have symptoms to go home and not return until they have recovered. Return to work criteria will be evaluated and communicated as soon as possible. Remember HIPPA: all health issues should remain absolutely confidential.
- 6) **Sick-leave and pay policies.** No changes at this time have been made to leave policies. If the employee or someone in their household decide to travel outside of the states listed above, you must self quarantine for 14 days upon return to be taken from the employees' accrued time. Faced with so much uncertainty, the temptation to fall back on familiar patterns can be great. The unusual circumstances however call for strategic thinking and an understanding that normal attendance rules simply may not apply. Therefore, if the pandemic continues at moderate severity, The Personnel Board may opt to temporarily modify existing policies. The Personnel Department will monitor current Federal legislation regarding paid leave and take appropriate action as necessary.
- 7) **Began social distancing immediately:** Social distancing measures in the work place may need to be considered and implemented. Keep 6 feet of space between employees, avoiding crowded work settings, canceling business-related face-to-face meetings, canceling travel and increasing use of phone and email. Limit meeting sizes to 20 in a single room.

- 8) **Changing Scopes of Work:** If the County were to experience peak levels of illness and absenteeism, we may not be able to operate in a “business as usual” mode. In this situation, the County will ascertain what functions we must maintain to conduct business and temporarily restructure around those. For example, healthy employees may be instructed to help out in other departments doing tasks not previously performed in their own jobs.
- 9) **Categorize Employees:** Categorize employee positions into two basic “buckets”: essential and non-essential.
- 10) **Promote Hygiene Practices:** Use hand sanitizer, promote effective hand washing, and encourage employees to avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes.
- 11) **Respiratory Protection:** Many questions remain about how COVID-19 is transmitted. Mounting data, however, support the likelihood of several modes (including virus being expelled through sneezes and coughs). At this time, the CDC does not recommend face masks for healthy people trying to protect against COVID-19. The CDC recommends surgical masks only for people who already show symptoms of coronavirus and must go outside, since wearing a mask can help prevent spreading the virus by protecting others nearby when you cough or sneeze. The agency also recommends these mask for caregivers of people infected with the virus.
- 12) **Suspend requirement for a doctor’s note:** Most sick employees will be discouraged from going to clinics unless they have severe complications or are in a high-risk group. As such, most employees will be unable to “prove” they had an infection or that they have recovered through a doctor’s note. Requiring one could delay their return to work and burden the healthcare industry. Therefore, we will not require doctor’s notes for employees due to suspected COVID-19 illness.
- 13) **Cleaning Practices:** Communicate with employees to clean their work surfaces that are frequently touched. The CDC does not recommend additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning.
- 14) **Payroll/Direct Deposit:** **In the event of a closure, time keepers should be prepared to make arrangements to key their time either at their workstation or home. Everyone should have a back-up trained. Any situations that may arise that would prevent time for your department from being keyed, should contact Anisa as soon as possible. (334-677-4736) Direct Deposit pay stubs and checks will be mailed if not available for delivery. This would be an excellent time to encourage anyone that does not have direct deposit to sign up now.**
- 15) **Remain Flexible:** Personnel policies and procedures need to remain flexible during times of pandemics. There is a difference between policies and protocols and fortunately, most if not all of the Personnel Policies are flexible enough to allow changes in protocol without violating or having to change Personnel Policy. Therefore, if it becomes necessary, protocols can be created for special circumstances like a pandemic. If the need arises, policies can be reviewed and/or updated as well to better accommodate and encourage safer and healthier work places.

The Personnel Department will send additional articles, resources and signage via email Tuesday morning.

TO STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH ALL CORRESPONDENCE:

We will send out all new information as needed and publish to the houstoncounty.org web page under the Personnel tab.