

## **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Workplace Policy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

Issued April 20, 2020

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Special thanks to all employees for your hard work, dedication and superb service throughout this pandemic. The safety of City employees and the public is of utmost importance. In that regard, the City has been regularly communicating information about its emergency preparedness plan, public health recommendations as reported by the Centers for Disease Control, the Illinois Department of Public Health and other trusted sources, and actions that have been taken for the public health, safety and welfare of all. The following Frequent Asked Questions and Answers has been updated to reflect the new Executive Order by the City of Highland Park to require Face Coverings, effective April 20, 2020. If you have any questions, please contact your supervisor, or either one of us.

Ghida S. Neukirch      Emily Taub  
City Manager              Human Resource Manager

### General COVID-19 Questions

#### **1) What is Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?**

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China in 2019.

#### **2) What can I do to help prevent the onset and/or spread of COVID-19?**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- 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 touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
  - Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

#### **3) Where can I find additional information on COVID-19?**

Information can be found from the following sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/>

- Illinois Department of Public Health: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/>
- Lake County Department of Public Health:  
<https://www.lakecountyl.gov/148/Health-Department-Community-Health-Cente>

The City of Highland Park is maintaining a webpage with a great deal of information on COVID-19 in general as well as information specific to Highland Park:

- <https://www.cityhpil.com/resident/covid-19/index.php>

## General Policy Questions

### 4) What is being done to protect City employees?

The health and safety of employees is a core priority of the City. The City has proactively implemented a number of different steps designed to protect the health and safety of employees including but not limited to the following:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been provided to First Responders who are interacting with the public.
- Face Coverings are available to all other employees; employees may also use their own face coverings as approved by the City.
- Increased cleaning of City buildings is taking place.
- Schedules and shift staggering is occurring to maintain social distancing.

Due to COVID-19 and the State of Illinois stay-at-home order, only essential employees who cannot work remotely as designated by their Department Director or designee should be reporting to City facilities. Employees that are expected to report to a City facility partially or fully to do their work, are encouraged to adhere to previously-issued preventive hygiene guidance, including washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands, and cleaning and disinfecting shared surfaces and objects that are touched frequently. When these preventative hygiene measures are practiced with diligence they are an effective means for minimizing the spread of the disease. In addition, you should consult with your Supervisor for specific protocols that may be in place for certain jobs.

In addition, all employees are encouraged to use physical distancing as practicable which means keeping a distance of at least 6 feet from others. In lieu of in-person meetings, conference calls or video conferencing should be scheduled to the greatest extent possible.

All employees are encouraged to contact their supervisor with recommendations to supplement physical distancing practices that are already being implemented.

### 5) Can employees be required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as facemasks, gloves, or gowns that are designed to reduce the transmission of COVID-19?

Yes, pursuant to an Executive Order, Essential Businesses and Operations, as defined in the Governor's Stay at Home order, which includes government services, employees are required to wear a face covering to include their nose and mouth made of cloth or other

material that is reasonably designed and made to inhibit, filter, or restrict the breath, sneeze, cough, or other exhaling from one's nose and mouth. The City will provide face covering for employees or employees may use their own covering. Appropriate face coverings include non-medical grade masks, homemade masks, scarves, bandanas, or handkerchiefs. Medical-grade masks and N95 respirators are not recommended for general use, and should be reserved for use by first responders, health care and medical providers. Employees are responsible for cleaning their own face coverings.

Additional PPE, beyond face coverings, may include gloves, gowns, laboratory coats, face shields or masks, eye protection, pocket masks, and other protective gear as may be required by the Department.

## Schedules & Work Assignments

### **6) Am I subject to being assigned to different work hours, shifts and/or locations?**

Yes, for various reasons in a declared emergency (building closure, operational/functional need, etc.) any and all employees may be required to work different hours, shifts, and/or locations.

### **7) During the COVID-19 outbreak can my supervisor cancel my vacation leave that has already been approved?**

Yes. Your Department Director or designee has the authority to cancel any pre-approved vacation requests. Please communicate planned travel with your supervisor. Employees who travel for voluntary purposes may be required to observe a 14-day quarantine upon their return home. If an employee is required to quarantine following voluntary travel, the employee will be unpaid unless the employee uses his or her accrued benefit time or FFCRA benefits.

## Compensation & Benefits

### **8) If I am sent home from work due to COVID-19, or if I stay home due to COVID-19, how will I be paid?**

Paychecks will continue to be processed through the Finance Department with no changes to method of distribution that you have previously arranged with the City.

### **9) How will I be paid?**

If payday is approaching and current pay period entries are complete, payroll will be issued as normal. However, if payday is approaching but current pay period entries are not complete, full-time employees will be issued the default value equal to their scheduled hours. Part-time employees may not receive a paycheck until pay period entries of their actual time worked are complete, or a calculation of hours under an emergency declaration is able to be completed. As necessary for any employee, adjustments will be processed during the next possible pay period.

Pay for employees who have enrolled in direct deposit will continue to be processed as usual. Employees who have requested a live check will have their checks mailed to them at their home address.

**10) Will my City sponsored healthcare plan cover medical expenses associated with treatment for COVID-19?**

Yes. You will have the same coverage that is currently available for any emergency or non-emergency illness.

**11) What assistance is available to me to help me cope with the emotional impact of a COVID-19 outbreak?**

The City of Highland Park provides resources to help employees cope with these types of life events through its Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). The City's primary EAP program is provided by Family Service of Lake County. Additional information can be obtained by contacting Family Service at 847.432.4981 Ext. 200.

The City also offers an alternative EAP via Morneau Shepell through The Standard. For additional information call 888.293.6948 or visit [workhealthlife.com/Standard3](http://workhealthlife.com/Standard3).

**12) What benefits are available to me under federal law?**

Effective April 1, 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provides paid benefit time to qualifying employees for Emergency Paid Sick Leave and for Expanded Family Medical Leave. Please see the City's FFCRA policy for more details.

## Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) & Leaves of Absences

**13) Does FMLA apply if: a) I contract COVID-19, b) my spouse or child contracts COVID-19 and I stay home to care for him/her?**

Confirmed cases of COVID-19 may qualify under FMLA for FMLA eligible employees for the period of time you or your covered family member is ill. Human Resources may send information on FMLA and require the completion of appropriate paperwork upon receipt of which eligibility will be reviewed.

**14) Does FMLA apply if I choose to self-quarantine for the recommended 14 days?**

Generally, no, unless the employee or covered family member is experiencing a serious health condition as defined in the FMLA. The City will address the potential application of FMLA leave or other available leave for persons who are non-symptomatic on a case by case basis.

## Other Questions

**15) If an employee appears ill, can a supervisor inquire about the nature of the employee's illness?**

Yes, an employer may ask if an employee has symptoms attributable to COVID-19. A supervisor can and should send an employee who appears ill home and should notify Human Resources. Employees are urged to communicate with their supervisor or Human Resources if the employee or anyone in their household is symptomatic or tested positive for COVID-19.

Human Resources may contact employees with limited inquiries as necessary to determine if other leave policies apply or if there is a health and safety risk to other City employees.

- 16) My child or family member's school/day or other care arrangements are closed related to COVID-19, however my child is not sick. I have no other child care arrangements. Can I bring the child to work with me?**

No. Use appropriate leave with proper approval pursuant to the City Employee Handbook, FFCRA Policy, and applicable collective bargaining agreements and side letters. If no leave is available, promptly notify your supervisor of the reason for your absence and provide verification of school or facility closure. In such cases, employees will not be disciplined for being absent if no leave is available provided appropriate documentation is received.

If care arrangements are closed related to COVID-19, the City will make an exception to the Sick Leave policy in this limited instance and allow the use of sick leave in addition to other leave types.

- 17) If I have a family member at home who is sick with COVID-19, should I go to work?**

Please evaluate the situation carefully and contact your Supervisor if you have any questions. As always, your health and safety, the health and safety of your family and City employees is the priority.

- 18) Does my supervisor have to approve my request to telecommute if there is a COVID-19 outbreak?**

No. The Department Director or designee, in consultation with the City Manager's office, shall make the determination for employees telecommuting.

- 20) What if I use public transportation to travel to and from work, and due to COVID-19, the public transit system shuts down and I am unable to get to work?**

It is important to plan ahead for this situation and look for other ways to travel to work. If you are unable to report to work, you will be required to take appropriate leave.

## Additional Questions

- 21) Who should I contact if I have additional questions?**

For employment related matters please contact Human Resources Manager Emily Taub at [etaub@cityhpil.com](mailto:etaub@cityhpil.com) or 847.926.1005. For questions specific to City services or operations please contact the appropriate Department.