

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 12, 2021

To: Executive Branch Agency Leadership & HR Directors

From: DeAngela Burns-Wallace, Secretary of Administration

Subject: State Agency Return to In-Person Work Guidance

By the end of May, all state employees will have had the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccination at no cost through the State of Kansas. While all employees may not have taken advantage of this opportunity, this fact as well as the widespread availability of fast and reliable testing for COVID-19 and the substantially reduced numbers of new positive cases being reported throughout the State are key factors in taking the next step in our response to this worldwide pandemic.

Therefore, after consulting with public health staff from KDHE, Governor Kelly has determined that State of Kansas offices will return to normal operations effective with the pay period beginning on June 13, 2021. All agencies may begin requiring all employees to physically return to work as of that date, in accordance with the guidance provided below. Agencies with seasonal or other demands that must have staff return to work prior to June 13, 2021 may do so only after receiving approval from the Governor's Office.

Guidance below was developed in consultation with KDHE, additional information on specific subjects can be found by clicking on the links throughout this document.

Workplace Considerations

COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, sneeze or participate in any activity that increases respiration. While the risk of COVID-19 spread increases in in-person work settings, there are a number of actions that can be taken to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread when returning to an in-person work environment. In particular, the combination of the following practices is critical to mitigating the possible spread of the virus:

- Wearing masks or other facial coverings
- Maintaining at least six feet of distance between individuals (i.e., social distancing)
- Following good hygiene and fundamental cleaning practices
- Limiting the gathering of large groups where social distancing cannot be maintained

Masks or other facial coverings will continue to be required for all State of Kansas employees and visitors to any State of Kansas facilities under the jurisdiction of the Governor. Notice of this requirement will continue to be posted at entrances to all State of Kansas buildings and public facing offices in other locations should do so as well. Additional guidance provided below.

Regarding social distancing, agencies should take all necessary steps to ensure that at least six feet of space can be maintained between employee workstations and other seating arrangements. This may include the minor reconfiguration or reorganization of floorplans or workstations, as well as the incorporation of engineering

controls such as physical barriers like plexiglass screens, where appropriate. Signs and floor markings will continue to be used throughout State of Kansas buildings to reinforce the importance of social distancing.

Agencies should reinforce the need for proper handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Where this is not available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% of alcohol may be used. Employees should be encouraged to practice hand hygiene frequently, especially upon arrival to the workplace, after coughing, sneezing or blowing one's nose, after going to the restroom and after touching objects that have been handled by other employees or customers.

Overall, it is also important to also remember that individual employees should take precautions in their personal lives to help control the risk of spreading disease within their workplace.

Remote Work Policy Considerations

While many employees have been required to work remotely to varying degrees over the course of this pandemic, this was due to public health and safety issues, not for the convenience of employees. The State of Kansas is not a traditional remote work environment, and while we will capitalize on what we have learned and how it can benefit future state operations – we should start from the stance of having state employees working in our offices still is a preferred norm.

With this in mind, agencies may continue to allow employees to work remotely in situations where adequate social distancing cannot be maintained in the office or as otherwise approved by the agency head, provided there is no disruption to agency operations. The determination of which positions should continue to work remotely should be an intentional process where both parties affirm and assess that remote work fits the needs of the agency, position functionality and the employee's effectiveness and interest.

Agencies should be mindful of equity issues, any special accommodations that may be needed, and opportunities to rebalance or adjust roles and responsibilities to meet business needs in the process of return to work planning.

Any agency that chooses to continue to allow remote work after June 13, 2021 must have a remote work or telework policy in place. The Department of Administration's (D of A) policy can be found at the following link: https://admin.ks.gov/docs/default-source/ops/dofa-personnel/telework-policy.pdf?sfvrsn=afd8cbc7_8

Agencies may adopt this policy or may develop their own policy, at the discretion of the agency head. Any policy that differs substantially from the D of A policy is subject to review by the Office of Personnel Services (OPS), upon request.

Required Use of Face Coverings (non-medical cloth masks)

KDHE recommends wearing a mask that fits snugly around the nose, mouth, and chin and has multiple layers of fabric. Alternatively, a thinner disposable mask may be worn underneath a cloth face mask to improve the fit. Additional information on mask guidance can be found at the following link: <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/441/KDHE-Mask-Guidance-PDF---3-1-21>

Individuals are required to wear masks or other face coverings except for when actively eating or drinking, working alone in a fully enclosed workspace, or when outside and able to maintain a safe social distance of six feet or greater. This includes all common areas, such as break rooms, elevators, hallways, restrooms and stairwells.

Individuals should be encouraged to bring more than one face covering to work each day, in the event their face covering should become wet or soiled. Keep worn and clean, unworn face coverings in separate sealed containers, such as a plastic bag. Agencies should have a small supply of face masks on hand in the event an employee or visitor arrives without one. Individuals wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch the face covering and to [wash their hands](#) frequently. Information should be provided on the [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).

Children age 5 years or under, anyone who is unable to wear a mask or facial covering due to a medical condition, persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, or communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication and persons for whom wearing a face mask would create a risk to the person related to their work are exempt from this requirement. Exceptions for other reasons will be considered on a case by case basis.

Screening Procedures

It is also important to remember that individual employees should take precautions in their personal lives to help control the risk of spreading disease within their workplace. Employees should continue to self-monitor and conduct self-screening activities before appearing for in-person work. Specifically, employees should ask themselves the following questions before reporting to work:

1. Have they been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with, or is suspected to have, COVID-19 within the last 14 days?

2. Are they experiencing any of the following symptoms?
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Stiffness/Rigidity
 - Muscle aches or pains
 - Fatigue/Weakness
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
 - Sudden loss of taste or smell
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Vomiting/diarrhea/stomach or abdominal pain

If an employee can answer “NO” to both of these questions, the employee should report to work as normal. If the answer to either of these questions is YES, the employee should contact their supervisor to report the symptoms and follow the appropriate guidance in this document.

Passive temperature check stations and posting of screening questions will continue to be in place in all State of Kansas buildings under the jurisdiction of the Governor. Agencies with work environments that have a high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 and/or have frequent close contact (less than six feet) with coworkers or the general public may adopt more active screening procedures or establish testing protocols in accordance with KDHE guidelines.

Employees Exhibiting Symptoms

Effective June 13, employees exhibiting [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 – whether or not they have been fully-vaccinated – should get tested for COVID-19 at state employee [HealthQuest Health Center](#) or one of the locations for testing at the following link: <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/280/COVID-19-Testing>

Any employee reporting symptoms will be provided with up to one day (number of hours dependent on the employee's regular work schedule) of paid leave (ADQ) immediately following the report of such symptoms. While on this initial period of ADQ, the employee should get tested for COVID-19 and notify the agency of the results of that test. Agencies shall require proof of the test result.

- If the results of that test are positive, the employee will be required to quarantine for a period of 14-days and will receive paid leave (ADQ) for that time.
- If the results of that test are negative, the employee will be required to return to work. If the employee chooses not to return to work, the employee will be required to utilize their own accrued leave for any such time.

If an employee does not get tested for COVID-19 and/or fails to notify or provide proof of the test result to their agency, the employee will be required to serve a quarantine as if they were positive but will be required to utilize their own accrued leave for any such time. The employee may, at any time during this period, get tested for COVID-19 and provide the agency with proof of the result and proceed in accordance with the results of the test, as indicated above. Employees should comply with all state and county contact tracing protocols.

Guidance for monitoring one's health at home, as well as the most recent quarantine guidance, can be found in the Isolation & Quarantine Toolkits section of KDHE's ["What to do if You Think You're Sick"](#) webpage.

Close Contacts

Also effective June 13, employees who have been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 should report that information to their agency as soon as they become aware of the positive result. "Close contact" means being within six feet of an individual who is positive for COVID-19 for ten minutes or more, either continuously or as an aggregate of lesser time periods, regardless of whether one or both parties were wearing masks or other face coverings.

Employees who have been fully vaccinated (i.e., at least 14 days have passed since their 2nd dose of either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or the single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine) are not required to quarantine as a result of a close contact with a positive case. Individuals in this case should self-monitor for symptoms as referenced earlier in this document and follow those provisions if they become symptomatic.

Employees who have not been vaccinated or choose not to disclose their vaccination status who report having been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 should get tested at state employee [HealthQuest Health Center](#) or one of the sites at the following link:
<https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/280/COVID-19-Testing>

Such employees will be provided with up to one day (number of hours dependent on the employee's regular work schedule) of paid leave (ADQ) immediately following the report of the close contact. While on this initial period of ADQ, the employee should get tested for COVID-19 and notify the agency of the results of that test. Agencies shall require proof of the test result.

- If the results of that test are positive, the employee will be required to quarantine for a period of 14-days and will receive paid leave (ADQ) for that time.
- If the results of that test are negative, the employee will be required to return to work. If the employee chooses not to return to work, the employee will be required to utilize their own accrued leave for any such time.

If an employee does not get tested for COVID-19 and/or fails to notify or provide proof of the test result to their agency, the employee will be required to serve a quarantine as if they were positive but will be required to utilize their own accrued leave for any such time. The employee may, at any time during this period, get tested for COVID-19 and provide the agency with proof of the result and proceed in accordance with the results of the test, as indicated above. Employees should comply with all state and county contact tracing protocols.

Guidance for monitoring one's health at home, close contact and the most recent quarantine guidance, can be found in the Isolation & Quarantine Toolkits section of KDHE's ["What to do if You Think You're Sick"](#) webpage.

Other Leave Usage

All other leave usage that was specifically approved for pandemic-related circumstances other than those specifically referenced above will no longer be available as of June 13, 2021. This includes leave that had previously been provided for employees with childcare issues due to the pandemic, or who are in at-risk/high-risk categories due to the pandemic. Employees in both of these circumstances will be required to utilize their own accrued leave for any time away from work due to those reasons beginning June 13, 2021.

The State's Infant at Work policy will remain suspended until further notice. Given that there is currently no COVID-19 vaccination available for infants, out of an abundance of caution, State Public Health officials do not believe that employees should bring their infants into the workplace at this time.

For any employee who is unable to be vaccinated due to medical or other documented reasons, agencies may grant appropriate exceptions to all leave policies throughout this guidance, on a case-by-case basis.

Educate & Support employees around COVID-19

Each agency should make this guidance as well as any additional COVID-19 related policies and procedures available to all employees. Telework/remote work policies should also be readily available.

As large numbers of employees transition back to in-person work it is important to ensure that there is support and resources around stress management, coping, and building resilience. KDHE recommends that we encourage employees to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed. Promote healthy eating, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind. Encourage employees to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling. Encourage employees to utilize ComPsych, the [Employee Assistance Program](#) for State of Kansas benefits eligible employees and their dependents. There is no charge for this service.

Travel

Beginning June 13, 2021, agencies may approve any business-related travel to a location that is not identified at the following link: <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/175/Travel-Exposure-Related-Isolation-Quaran> Please check site before and after travel as it is frequently updated. Business-related travel to any location listed at the above referenced link may be approved due to an emergency or extreme circumstance, but the agency should consider all other possible options before doing so.

There are no restrictions on employees traveling outside of work, but employees who travel to or through any location identified at the above referenced link are subject to quarantine unless they are fully vaccinated. The leave to be used for that quarantine depends on the circumstances of the travel.

If the location to or through which an individual travels is added to the list of locations requiring a mandatory quarantine upon return while the employee is travelling or after the employee's return, the employee will receive paid leave (ADQ) for the full period of the quarantine.

If the location has been added to the list of locations requiring a mandatory quarantine upon return prior to the employee's departure for such destination, the employee will be required to use their own accrued leave for the full period of the quarantine. The fact that an employee was not aware that the location required a mandatory quarantine upon return shall not be an excuse to allow the employee to receive paid leave for a mandatory quarantine. An agency may, however, approve paid leave (ADQ) for an employee in such a situation when the travel was required due to a family emergency or other extreme circumstance.

In the event that the agency requires travel to a location listed at the above referenced link due to an emergency or extreme circumstance, the employee will receive paid leave (ADQ) for the full period of the quarantine.

Gatherings/Conferences

Gatherings should be limited to spaces where individuals can maintain at least six feet of distance from one another. KDHE recommends that snacks provided for meetings are individually wrapped and for meals that buffet-style or communal meals are discouraged. Instead consider boxed meals or individually wrapped items. Virtual meeting tools should continue to be used whenever possible to limit in-person meetings.

As you consider planning larger gathers later in the summer, please ensure that plans for any such events adhere to KDHE guidance, including considerations of overall capacity, space for social distancing, ventilation, mask-wearing, and symptom screening. Make sure that communications about such events clearly address the planned public health considerations and that attendees are aware that the agency may have to adjust plans in response to changes in public health conditions.

Additional guidance regarding larger gatherings will be provided later this summer.

Signs and Messages

Agencies are encouraged to post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances and exits, and in restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#) and describe how to [stop the spread](#) of germs such as by [properly washing hands](#), [properly wearing a cloth face covering](#), and [following social distancing guidelines](#).

Find freely available KDHE print and digital resources on [KDHE's Publications webpage](#). CDC also provides print and digital resources on [CDC's communication resources](#) main page. Agencies can contact the State Print Office if they need large numbers, large prints, or specialized pieces (for example, stickers, laminates, or other signage).

Work Environment Testing Consideration

The more people an employee interacts with and the longer that interaction, the closer the physical interaction between people, and the more sharing of equipment there is by multiple people, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in in-person work environments as

follows. More frequent testing protocols may be considered for high impact environments. For more information on additional workplace testing contact KDHE.

Low Impact

- Jobs that do not require contact with people known or suspected of being currently infected with COVID-19
- Jobs that do not have frequent close contact (within 6 feet) with coworkers or the general public

Medium Impact

- Jobs that do not require contact with people known or suspected of being currently infected with COVID-19
- Jobs that have minimal close contact (within 6 feet) with coworkers or the general public

High Impact

- Jobs with a high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19
- Jobs that have frequent close contact (within 6 feet) with coworkers or the general public

Recommended additional CDC Resources

- Restart Readiness Checklist for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/resuming-business-toolkit.html#restart-readiness-checklist>
- For employers: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>
- For office buildings: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html>
- For childcare, schools, and youth programs: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>
- Transportation and Delivery: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/transportation/index.html>
- Conserving and Extending Filtering Facepiece Respirator Supply in Non-Healthcare Sectors: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/conserving-respirator-supply.html>

Sources

1. [Worker Exposure Risk to COVID-19](#); Occupational Safety and Health Administration (March 2020).
2. [COVID-19 MIOSHA Emergency Rules](#); Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (October 2020).
3. [Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (March 8, 2021).
4. [Ad Astra: A Plan to Reopen Kansas](#); Kansas Office of the Governor (April 30, 2020).
5. [Core Recommendations for Reducing Airborne Infectious Aerosol Exposure](#); ASHRAE Epidemic Task Force (January 6, 2021).
6. [Reopening: Guidance for General Office Settings](#); American Industrial Hygiene Association (2020).
7. [OSHR Guidance: State Agency COVID-19](#); North Carolina Office of State Human Resources (March 3, 2021).
8. [Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#); United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (January 29, 2021).
9. [COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Office Workspaces](#); California Department of Public Health and Environment and CalOSHA (July 29, 2020).
10. [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace for Employers](#); California Department of Public Health and Environment and CalOSHA (September 18, 2020).
11. [Resuming Business Toolkit](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (May 21, 2020).
12. [General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (February 11, 2021).
13. [Reopening? D&I Considerations and Insights](#); Diversity Best Practices (May 2020).