



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About The State Coronavirus (COVID-19) Policy

This FAQ provides information to Executive Branch employees of the State of Rhode Island regarding workplaces and COVID-19. This document serves as a supplement to the COVID-19 Policy. All employees must review this policy in full to ensure they have an understanding of the procedures to be followed involving communicable diseases and the workplace.

What do I do if I am not feeling well and believe I have a COVID-19, I have confirmation from a healthcare provider that I have COVID-19, or I have been exposed to someone with known or suspected COVID-19?

If an employee is not feeling well and he or she suspects that they have COVID-19, they should not report to work, should call into their supervisor as required and contact their primary care physician or other healthcare provider.

If an employee has received confirmation from a healthcare provider that they have COVID-19, they must notify their supervisor or agency director as soon as possible. The supervisor or agency director will then contact the Division of Human Resources Disability Management Unit (DMU). DMU will request medical information from the employee as necessary and provide the employee with appropriate documents, such as those related to the [Family and Medical Leave Act](#) (FMLA) or other necessary forms. Note that employees who have confirmation of COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to the workplace without a note from a licensed physician.

If an employee has had direct, face-to-face contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19, the employee should contact their supervisor or agency director as soon as possible. Their supervisor will then contact the agency's Human Resources Business Partner, who will work with the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) to determine appropriate action, which may include quarantine.

What if an employee comes to work ill? Can he or she be ordered to leave the work premises?

In the best interest of public health and safety, an employee can be ordered to leave the workplace.

What if I become ill and I am unable to directly contact my supervisor?

If you are unable to directly contact your supervisor because you are incapacitated, request a family member or friend contact your supervisor as soon as possible. If this is not possible, contact your supervisor as soon as you are able.

If I do need to be out of work due to COVID-19, what type of leave is available to me?

Employees out of work for COVID-19-related reasons may discharge paid leave. The type of paid leave will be dependent upon the employee's individual situation (please refer to the Division of Human Resources COVID-19 policy). For additional information, please review the Personnel Rules covering the following types of leave:

- Sick leave
- Family Sick Leave
- Annual leave (vacation)
- Compensatory leave
- Leave without pay
- Medical leave without pay

In the case of a confirmed diagnosis, work supervisors must be notified and the Division of Human Resources will work with the employee to ensure they are supported during recovery.

What happens if I do not have enough leave to cover a COVID-19-related absence?

In the best interest of public health and safety for both our co-workers and the public that we serve, employees should always stay home when they are ill or exhibiting symptoms of illness.

In those situations when an employee has used all his or her available accrued time, they should contact their supervisor to discuss any available options.

In those situations where the State has imposed a mandatory quarantine on an employee for a specified period of time, HR will work with the employee and their supervisor regarding how the employee will be paid.

If I'm not sick but I do not want to come to work for fear of becoming ill, are agencies required to authorize annual or compensatory leave?

First, ensure you have all the facts by obtaining clear and accurate information from reliable sources. RIDOH and CDC are established sources of information on communicable diseases.

Agencies are not required to authorize an annual leave request or compensatory leave and will not authorize leave if it unduly disrupts the operations of the agency.

Are there any alternative leave or compensation policies under consideration at this time? What about workplace alternatives?

While there are no alternative compensation or leave policies being instituted at this time beyond what has already been covered, employees should be sure to review and consider workplace alternatives available through the [Flexible Work Arrangements Policy](#) and the [Teleworking Policy](#). Contact your supervisor to discuss if one of these alternative work arrangements is an option for you. If the State makes any adjustments to these policies in the future, the Department of Administration will communicate those updates promptly.

Has the Governor declared a state of emergency due to COVID-19? If not, how will I know if she does?

As of March 5, 2020 Governor Gina M. Raimondo has not declared a state of emergency. If she does, she will make a public announcement and the Department of Administration will communicate this to state employees, along with any corresponding updates.

If there was ever an outbreak at a state agency or building, what is the maximum number of overtime hours I can be required to work?

There is no limit to the number of hours your agency can require you to work. All overtime must be properly authorized as per the State's [Overtime Policy](#).

If you are a non-exempt (standard) employee, your agency is required to pay you overtime in the form of pay or compensatory leave for hours worked in excess of 40 in a work week as per the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) or in accordance overtime provisions in applicable union collective bargaining agreements (CBAs).

If you are an exempt employee and one of the specific circumstances is declared under the Scope of the [Exempt Position Compensatory Time Policy](#), then you may be eligible for compensatory time. Please review the Policy for a full understanding of its rules and provisions.

My family and I have decided to proceed with our family vacation in a country that has now been designated as a Level 3 area. Do I have to report this to the Division of Human Resources or the Department of Health? What are the steps I should take?

Employees who are returning from travel to countries that have been designated by the CDC as a [Level 2 or Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#) will be required to stay home from work and self-monitor for any symptoms for the specified quarantine period as determined by RIDOH and CDC.

I am returning from a foreign country that has not been listed by the CDC as a Level 2 or 3 area, but I am feeling a little unwell. Should I report this to someone?

If an employee is not feeling well and he or she suspects that he or she has COVID-19, the employee should not report to work and call his or her supervisor as required. In addition, the employee should contact their primary care physician or other healthcare provider.

My team and I are scheduled to attend an out-of-state conference, but we are a little anxious at the thought of traveling. Is there any guidance from the State or federal government that can help us make an informed decision about the risks involved?

All domestic travel will be subject to an additional layer of approval under this policy, so we encourage you to talk with your supervisor or agency director about the necessity of the trip. The State and federal government have been providing constant updates as new information about COVID-19 becomes available, and that also includes travel restriction updates. You can stay informed by visiting the Rhode Island Department of Health [website](#) or by calling the Department's hotline at 401-222-8022.

I wish to work remotely if I can, but I don't have a state-owned laptop. If I have to self-quarantine, can I use my own devices from home or do I need to be set up with equipment from the Division of Information Technology?

If you are required to be in quarantine and wish to utilize the State's Teleworking Policy, talk to your supervisor first about whether teleworking is an appropriate option and, if so, what equipment is needed to ensure continuity of critical operations. The Division of Information Technology stands ready to support authorized employees who need to work from home as a result of a COVID-19-related situation.

What should I do if I have questions about COVID-19?

- You can visit www.health.ri.gov/covid;
- You can call 401-222-8022; or
- You can write to RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov