

COVID-19 Situational Telework

- **New:** Employees will continue to be approved to telework due to COVID-19 until the end of May. This date may be adjusted as the State continues to provide guidance concerning COVID-19.
- Employees who are currently approved through the interim telework program and would like to volunteer to telecommute for 50% or more of their scheduled work week should send a request to their supervisor via email.
- Employees who would like to *volunteer* for COVID-19 situational telework for 50% or more of their scheduled workweek should send their request to their supervisor via an email requesting to telework. The email must indicate their name and certify that they meet the technology guidelines based upon the document emailed to all staff entitled “TECHNICAL CRITERIA & REQUIREMENTS FOR USING CLOUD SERVICES & ACCESS TO DOT INTERNAL APPLICATIONS REMOTELY”.
- Due to the uncertainty and difficult situations created by COVID-19, such as mass closures of Connecticut schools, the agency is looking to be as flexible as possible during teleworking hours, including to permit it while children are home from school.
- Employees approved will be required to check in with his or her supervisor throughout the day. Arrangements should be made with the supervisor and manager on check ins and work assignments.
- A declaration page from the employee’s homeowner’s or renter’s insurance does not need to be immediately provided, but should be submitted at a later date.
- *Employees who are teleworking should use the following timesheet coding: REGTC, used in conjunction with override reason code TCC19.*
- Employees should continue to follow protocol for requests for leave time.
- We understand that certain job functions cannot be handled through telework. If your job function cannot be completed through telework, but you are facing childcare issues or other constraints, the agency has received guidance to allow for flexible work schedules (see below) or other contingencies. Please contact your supervisor or HR representative.

Employee Request to Modify Work Schedule for COVID-19

- Due to the uncertainty and difficult situations created by COVID-19, such as mass closures of Connecticut schools, the agency is looking to be as flexible as possible for requests to modify work schedules.
- Employees who would like to volunteer to modify their work schedule should send a request to their supervisor via email. The request should include the day(s) and time(s) in which the employee would like to work. We are looking to extend the hours of operation for the Newington Headquarters, to allow employees to stagger work schedules later in the evening if they prefer. We will provide information as soon as we finalize details.

Supervisor and Managers Review Process for Telework, Modify Work Schedule for COVID-19 & Leave Requests under 5-248 (a) for child care due to school closures (UPDATED)

- In order to streamline and make the approval process as efficient as possible, the supervisor should review and make his/her recommendation to their manager. The employee should meet the technology guidelines included in the document emailed to all staff entitled “TECHNICAL CRITERIA & REQUIREMENTS FOR USING CLOUD SERVICES & ACCESS TO DOT INTERNAL APPLICATIONS REMOTELY”. The supervisor should forward their approval/disapproval to their manager via email.
- The Manager may authorize employees to telecommute even if they are not in a job classification listed in Appendix A of the Interim Telework Guidelines, however, under no circumstances can an employee in a hazardous duty job be allowed to telework. The manager should email the employee the final decision with a copy to the supervisor, their human resources representative, and Jim Ritter.
- The Supervisor should establish arrangements with the employee pertaining to periodic check ins and work assignments.
- Employees are still required to continue to follow protocol for requests for leave time.
- Supervisors should send their recommendation for an employee’s modified work schedule to his/her manager. The manager should email the employee the final decision with a copy to the supervisor, their human resources representative, and Jim Ritter.
- Bureau Chiefs will be expected to share information with their human resources representative and Jim Ritter, including the employee(s) name and title, and for employees whose schedules are modified, the current schedule and revised schedule.
- If an employee inquires about taking leave to provide at-home care, the recommended approach is to ask the employee about the need to be at home. This question can be open to a discussion about the hours for which an employee requires at-home coverage, and whether their needs could be met through working ½ days, modifying the schedule, telework etc.
- **Revised:** Requests for leave under 5-248(a) for 14 calendar days must be sent to the employee’s human resources representative for approval.

14-Day Calendar Leave under 5-248(a)

1. An employee may be allowed to telework or flex his/her work schedule, if he/she will need to be at home to care for their children or other dependents because school, daycare or eldercare has closed or employees cannot get to work because of transportation disruptions. (Level C)
- Employees who are impacted with any of these situations may be allowed to telework and/or change their work schedule.

- **Revised:** If telework is not possible, the employee may request a paid leave under 5-248(a) for the non-worked hours within a 14-day calendar period to his/her human resources representative. Requests for leave under 5-248(a) for 14-calendar days are approved by human resources effective 4/28/20.
 - If the employee teleworks part-time, leave will be provided wages for the balance of hours scheduled to work.
 - If employee's inability to come to work because of COVID-19-related disruptions continues beyond the 14 calendar days, the employee has the choice of using any of their earned accruals, including sick leave, or take unpaid leave.
 - **New:** Employees may be eligible for the Families First Coronavirus Response Act ("FFCRA" or "Act") effective April 1 and remains in effective through December 31, 2020. Eligibility and benefits will vary depending on position within the agency and each situation. **Employees should submit their Employee Request – FFCRA form and required documentation to Human Resources: Lisa Cheesbro via email at Lisa.Cheesbro@ct.gov or Cheryl Starosz via email at Cheryl.Starosz@ct.gov**
2. Employees shall not come to work who are actually sick with COVID-19 symptoms, or who are caring for sick family members with COVID-19 or COVID-19 like symptoms. (Level A)
- Employees who are impacted with any of these situations may be allowed to telework AND if medically appropriate. People who are too sick to work or who are caring for seriously ill family members **are not** expected to work. If telework is not possible, the employee may apply for a paid leave for the non-worked hours within a 14-day calendar period to their supervisor.
 - If the employee teleworks part-time, leave will be provided wages for the balance of hours scheduled to work.
 - If the employee's illness or need to care for sick family members continues beyond the 14 calendar days, the employee may use earned accruals or choose to go unpaid, **provided that sick employees must use their sick leave accruals first.** Once the employee has exhausted sick leave accruals they can use other accruals, take unpaid leave, or apply for additional benefits as provided by state policy or collective bargaining agreement
3. Updated: Employees shall not come to work if the employee is returning from a country designated by the CDC as a **Level 3** country or employee has been directed by a medical provider or government official to self-monitor at home due to potential COVID-19 exposure or employee's underlying medical condition. (Level B)
- Employees who are impacted with any of these situations may be allowed to telework.
 - If telework is not possible, the employee may apply for a paid leave for the non-worked hours within a 14-day calendar period under 5-248(a) to their supervisor.
 - If the employee teleworks part-time, leave will be provided wages for the balance of hours scheduled to work.
 - If a medical provider or government official directs an employee to stay home beyond 14 days, the employee may request leave per standard practice.

4. Employees returning from a Level 2 country or who have engaged in inter-state travel within the United States, employees who is domiciled with or had contact with a person who has been directed by a medical provider or government official to self-monitor at home, employees who had contact with someone who had contact with a person who has been directed by a medical provider or government official to self-monitor at home, employees who have concerns about exposure through contact with persons in public settings, including the workplace, or employee who is medically fragile (per medical documentation on file at the agency) but has had no apparent exposure. (Level D)

- Employee may request to telework or work a flex schedule, if approved by the agency.
- Employee may request to use accruals to take time away from work consistent with standard policies.

Key Reminders

- This supersedes previous emails concerning telework, modified work schedules and employees are impacted by COVID-19 in different way -
- Employees must meet technology guidelines.
- **Updated** - Situational telework due to COVID-19 will be approved until the end of May
- Non-hazardous duty managers, supervisors, confidential employees and appointed officials are permitted to telework pursuant to Item No. 2719-E
- Employees will not be approved for VSRP in lieu of taking COVID-19 paid or unpaid leave.
- If an employee cannot provide medical certification for paid leave under 5-248(a), the employee shall provide a written explanation to their agency Human Resources professional describing their symptoms, the directions they have received from medical providers or government officials (if any), and any other supporting documentation they may possess. the document should include contact information for the medical provider.

Timesheet Coding

Authorized Paid Leave Pursuant to 5-248(a): LOPD, used in conjunction with override reason code PDC19. Must have an approved leave on file with supervisor and human resources.

Telework: REGTC, used in conjunction with override reason code TCC19. Must have an approved telework approval on file with supervisor and human resources.

Personal Illness (when not using leave pursuant to 5-248(a)): Appropriate sick leave code and other accrual codes as necessary, used in conjunction with override reason code SCV19

Caregiver of a family member who is sick with COVID-19 (when not teleworking or using leave pursuant to 5-248(a)): Appropriate sick leave code and other accrual codes as necessary, used in conjunction with override reason code SFC19

School, Daycare or Transportation closure (when not teleworking or when not using leave pursuant to 5-248(a)): Appropriate leave code, used in conjunction with override reason code BCC19.

Questions and Answers

- **If spouses are both employed by the state, are they each eligible for 14 days of compensation under 5-248(a) to provide childcare?**

No. The provision allows for a parent to be at home with children. If the spouses wish to split the time within the 14-day period, they may do so. Note that splitting the time does not increase the duration of the 14-day period.

- **Can a qualified individual access the 14 days of compensation under 5-248(a) intermittently?**

Yes. The time is available to a qualified individual for up to 14 days. Accessing the time intermittently (and using less than the full allotment) does not extend the benefit beyond 14 days.

- **An employee has requested to use the compensation allocation under 5-248(a) because they have a child whose college is closing, and the child needs to be moved home. Does this apply?**

No. Paid leave under 5-248(a) does not apply in this situation, as the purpose is to afford employees the ability to be at home with individuals who are not able to provide self-care

- **An employee reports that they are self-quarantined on advice of the medical provider. Is it correct that the information from the provider can be in a variety of formats – email, letter, etc.?**

Yes. For these purposes, the information does not need to be on the standard medical certificate; although a signature is not required under the current situation, the document should include contact information for the medical provider.

- **An employee is out on an approved FMLA leave and their child's school is now closed. How will the employee's code his/her absence?**

FMLA continues to be charged because the employee is unable to work due to an FMLA qualifying reason

- ***An employee has a child whose school is closed and they do not have an alternative means of child care? Can they bring their child to work?***

No

- **When does the 14-day calendar period of paid leave under 5-248(a) start?**

The 14-day period begins on the date the need for its use commences. For example, if a school closed on March 16, 2020, but the employee does not need to use the leave to care for their child until March 20, 2020, the 14 day calendar period begins on March 20, 2020 and continues for 14 calendar days or until the school reopens, whichever is earlier.

- ***An employee at our agency has just reported that she has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. What should we do?***

In the event that the agency learns that it has an employee who has been **diagnosed** with COVID-19, the agency's human resources representative will be contacting the employee to verify the following information:

- That the person has actually tested positive for COVID-19 (as opposed to just being told by a medical provider to assume that he or she may have it).
- The last date the person was physically in the office • The locations in the office where the person spent more than 15 minutes • The people in the office with whom the person was in close contact. In this context, "close contact" means a person who was within 6 feet and spent more than 15 minutes with the person in an enclosed space (like an office or conference room).
- The agency will notify any employee who was in close contact with the person who was diagnosed to send them home to contact their own medical provider and to self-monitor at home for 14 days. (In so doing, the agency will make every effort to avoid comprising the confidentiality of the diagnosed person's identity).
- The agency will follow the CDC's guidance regarding cleaning the areas occupied by the **diagnosed** employee.
- In the event an employee has been confirmed to have COVID-19 **(i.e. actually had a positive test, not just respiratory-like symptoms)**, everyone who has **had** close contact with that employee needs to self-monitor at home for 14 days from the date they were last exposed to the person confirmed to have COVID 19.

- **Is documentation required to ensure a school's closure.**

No, because all schools are currently closed.

Updates as of April 28, 2020:

- **Is an employee in a Working Test Period eligible for the paid leave entitlement under 5-248(a)?**

Yes. The agency can extend the Working Test Period to accommodate the leave days taken.

- **Employees have heard that people aged 60 or above should stay home. Does this apply to the State workforce?**

This COVID-19 guidance document and the designation document should be followed when making determinations about the State workforce. Telecommuting is encouraged for all employees unless operational needs or technology constraints prevent it.

- **Is documentation required to prove that a daycare or eldercare facility is closed?**

Yes, either the name of the establishment with specific contact information or documentation from the establishment about the closure should be sent with each employee request.

- **Is there a maximum number of staff that can be allowed to be at home on paid leave under 5-248(a) based upon the operational needs of the agency?**

No.

- **If an employee is out on paid leave for the 14 calendar day period due to school closure and then this same employee becomes sick with COVID-19 or COVID- 19– like symptoms, would this employee be entitled to be out on paid leave for another 14 day calendar period based upon the current guidance?**

No. Based upon the current guidance, eligible employees are entitled to one 14 calendar day period of paid leave under 5-248(a) commencing on the date the need for its use begins.

- **If the window for payment of leave under 5-248(a) is 14 days, for what hours during that period is an employee allowed compensation, and how would this apply for part-time employees?**

Compensation for the paid leave is determined based on the employee's regular scheduled hours, less hours worked. This means that for part timers, availability for pay would encompass only the portion of the 14 days during which there were regular scheduled hours.

- **An employee in the office is coughing a lot. Can we send that employee home?**

Yes, under these specific circumstances: A person who is exhibiting COVID-19 like symptoms (*fever, coughing or shortness of breath*) should be separated from coworkers and sent home unless the employee can assert with a reasonable degree of certainty that the symptoms are due to a condition or circumstance completely unrelated to COVID-19 (such as coughing because he or she choked on a sip of water or shortness of breath due to walking up several flights of stairs). The agency HR professional or senior management on-site should engage in this communication with the affected individual (preferably by phone in order to maintain appropriate social distancing).

- **Can an agency require an employee to telecommute even if the employee would rather work in the office?**

Yes, because, generally, the State has the authority to assign staff to work in temporary duty stations; this authority includes assigning staff to work from their homes. In practice, the agency will exercise discretion using common sense and empathy in order to understand the specific concerns or issues that prompted the employee to resist working from home.

- **What documentation is required to allow an employee to return to work who has used the total entitlement of 14 calendar days paid leave under 5-248(a) for the purpose of self-monitoring due to a possible exposure to COVID-19?**

An employee who remains asymptomatic can return to work upon receipt of a statement from the employee indicating they have no symptoms.

- **What happens after an employee has used the total entitlement of 14 calendar days paid leave under 5-248(a) as a result of being directed by a medical provider or government official to self-monitor at home due to potential exposure to COVID-19 or underlying medical condition and for whom telework is not an option?**

If the employee remains directed by a medical provider or government official to stay at home for self-monitoring beyond 14 calendar days, the employee can use the appropriate sick leave accruals.

- **What happens after an employee has used the total entitlement of 14 calendar days paid leave under 5-248(a) as a result of being sick with COVID-19 or COVID-19-like symptoms, or while caring for sick family with COVID-19 or COVID-19-like symptoms?**

If the employee remains sick or the family member remains sick and still requires care, the employee can use the appropriate sick leave accruals. If applicable, donated sick leave, advanced sick leave or extended sick leave apply.

- **Can an employee be required to return to work who has been approved to attend classes for career mobility?**

Yes. Classes have either been canceled or are now offered on-line allowing the employee to take the class during off hours. At this time, proper levels of staff must be maintained to meet agency operational needs.

- **Are employees on second or third shift eligible for 14 days of paid leave under 5248(a) when their child's daycare is closed?**

Yes, it is recommended to secure documentation. Either the name of the establishment with specific contact information or documentation from the establishment about the closure should be obtained.

- **Is any additional compensation or compensatory time authorized for employees designated as Level 1 who must report to work?**

No.

- **Once a person has tested positive for COVID19 or been informed by a physician that they are presumptive positive, and have not been tested but advised by a physician to not report for work, what documentation is necessary to return to duty, when able?**

The medical documentation requirements in each collective bargaining agreement or state personnel regulation should be followed, as appropriate. If a collective bargaining contract requires a medical certificate after five (5) or more working days, then an employee who has crossed that threshold for a COVID-19 related illness should provide documentation upon return. Temporarily, during the pandemic, agencies may accept an email or simple medical note from a treating physician, rather than the prescribed State Medical Certificate (form #P-33A).

- **How should I code my timesheet when the building where I normally work is closed due to this emergency pandemic situation and, due to the nature of my job or technological constraints, I am unable to work remotely?**

Time Reporting Code LWWTR along with Override Reason Code NEC19.

- **How should I code my timesheet when the building where I normally work is closed due to this emergency pandemic situation but I am able to work remotely?**

Time Reporting Code REGTC for all hours you are able to work along with Override Reason Code TCC19; LOPD for hours you are unable to work along with Override Reason Code NEC19

- **How do I code a holiday when I am absent from work due to a COVID-19 related reason?**

The Time Reporting Code HOL is to be used when you do not work on the day a state holiday is observed, as is normally done.

- **Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, not all trainees are able to meet all of their program objectives. Has any consideration been given to extending the length of training programs under these extraordinary circumstances?**

Yes. Executive Order 7M extends the 3-year timeframe to reclassify an employee who has completed their training program as described in C.G.S. Sec. 5-234 by up to 90 days from the end of the Public Health and Civil Preparedness Emergency declared on March 10, 2020.

As a general rule an extension should be contemplated when program requirements are tied to duties, proficiencies, or achievements the employee has not been able to perform or accomplish satisfactorily due to the impact of COVID-19.

- **In accordance with Executive Order No. 7BB, must all employees wear a face covering all day, every day they are at work (outside of their home)?**

No. The Executive Order requires employees wear a face covering whenever social distancing is not possible. Employees must comply with the Executive Order and any agency policy on this topic unless there is a medical condition that prevents compliance.