

Department of Administrative Services (DAS)
Return to State Buildings Guidance and DAS-HR FAQs
May 20, 2021

The Department of Administrative Services is issuing the following guidance for State of Iowa Agencies returning to State buildings:

1. Phased-in Return to State Buildings

Agencies may use a phased-in approach for employees to return to State buildings by July 1, 2021. Timelines and guidelines for the phases are up to each agency, but must include clear notification to employees and proper paperwork for any ongoing use of telework.

Any employees who will work from home on a regular, ongoing basis after July 1, 2021, must have a signed telework agreement in their personnel file. An employee may not telework from locations outside the State of Iowa without DAS approval. For more information, please see the [Telework Program](#) guidelines and agreement form.

Agencies should resume in-person business services. In an effort to capitalize on any efficiencies gained, agencies should also consider retaining virtual access to services.

In addition to returning to the office, state-authorized business travel is also fully permitted. Please adhere to the standard travel policies in place and any agency-specific policies regarding approval.

2. COVID-19 Positive Case Confirmation

State employees who test positive for COVID-19 must follow the following IDPH guidance regarding isolation and should contact their supervisor regarding leave status.

- Employees who test positive for COVID-19 should stay at home, away from other people, for 10 days after symptoms start and 24 hours with no fever and improved symptoms. If someone never developed symptoms, they should stay home for 10 days following a positive test.

3. State Office Building Cleaning

- If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in your office within the last 24 hours, you should clean AND disinfect the space. For additional custodial service needs and disinfection services, please contact 515-242-5120, option 3.
- DAS recommends following [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for cleaning protocols](#).
- Any necessary deep cleaning and disinfecting treatment will be arranged by DAS.
- Service will be billed to the agency.

4. Building Protocols and COVID-19 Mitigation

- Support healthy hygiene behaviors by providing adequate supplies, including soap, paper towels, tissues, no-touch trash cans, and hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol.
- With some exceptions for direct care agencies, masks or cloth face coverings are not required in state government buildings. Employees should contact their supervisors with any questions. DAS stands ready to respond to any supervisor questions.
- Each agency must ensure that hired contractors adhere to all proper protocols in State buildings.

5. COVID-19 Vaccines

- State employees are encouraged to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine. [Vaccinate Iowa - Sleeves Up](#), contains information regarding the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines and includes an interactive tool to locate vaccine providers. State employees may utilize paid leave to get vaccinated.
- COVID-19 vaccines are not mandated for any State of Iowa employee.
- As a general practice, an appointing authority should not ask for an employee's vaccination status except if the inquiry is job related and consistent with a documented business necessity. If requested, the appointing authority must ensure that they do not obtain additional medical information beyond the fact the employee is or is not vaccinated.

Frequently-Asked Questions

These FAQs are being updated and posted as the need arises. If you print the FAQs, please note the date above to ensure you have the most updated version.

If you have additional questions, please contact DAS-HR.

Benefits

Q1: If an employee believes he or she has been exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace or through the performance of work, is the exposure subject to Workers Compensation?

A1: Workers Compensation may cover a diagnosis of COVID-19 if the exposure can be shown to have occurred through performance of the work and results in a positive test for COVID-19. Employees should notify their supervisor immediately and call their primary care provider if they believe they have a potential exposure.

Q2: Is the appointing authority required to approve paid leave for employees who are out of work because they have or have been exposed to COVID-19, have been exposed to a family member with COVID-19, or are caring for a family member with COVID-19?

A2: Iowa Code sec. 70A.1(5) provides for the use of sick leave for contagious diseases if the employee's confinement is required, if the employee is rendered unable to perform assigned duties, or if the performance of assigned duties would jeopardize the employee's health or recovery.

As of May 20, 2021, an Appointing Authority may no longer advance sick leave to cover absences. The sick leave hours advanced will be recouped from accrued sick leave earned during each pay period beginning July 1, 2021.

Q3: Will State of Iowa employees incur costs related to COVID-19 treatment and testing?

A3: The State of Iowa has worked with Wellmark to waive cost sharing (co-pay, coinsurance, deductible) for COVID-19 treatment and testing. Please see [Wellmark's website](#) for more information. The cost sharing waiver for treatment expires on July 1, 2021.

Q4: Are employees able to participate in telehealth visits with a healthcare provider?

A4: Yes. Employees are encouraged to take advantage of virtual care. Medical and mental health phone visits are available to all covered State of Iowa employees. Employees can contact their in-network healthcare provider to see if the provider offers telehealth visits. The plan also offers [Doctor On Demand®](#) which utilizes a pool of doctors to address health concerns.

Leave Usage

Q5: If an employee is ill or caring for an ill family member, is the employee eligible to take leave?

A5: DAS-HR administrative rules and the SPOC collective bargaining agreement have provisions regarding the use of sick leave, vacation, compensatory time, Family and Medical Leave Act ([FMLA](#)), and leave without pay. Managers are strongly encouraged to contact DAS with questions about leave use.

In addition to leave for their own illness, employees may use sick leave for the care or necessary attention of immediate family members. The appointing authority should grant care or necessary attention leave at the employee's convenience, except where such leave interferes with the staffing needs of the appointing authority.

*****Please note there is an admin rule waiver in place that will remove the 40-hour cap on care or necessary attention for the purposes of caring for immediate family members impacted by COVID-19. This admin rule waiver will expire upon expiration of the Governor's State of Public Health Disaster Emergency.*****

An employee who is sick or whose family members are sick *may* be entitled to leave under the FMLA. The FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a designated 12-month leave year for specified family and medical reasons, which may include the flu where complications arise that create a serious health condition as defined by the FMLA and if certified by a Health Care Provider on the appropriate FMLA forms.

An employee may file a claim with Reed Group concerning COVID-19. If the effects of COVID-19 are lasting beyond the standard 10-day period for a positive test result or hospitalization occurs, agencies should have employees file a claim with the Reed Group. Employees will still need to follow the appropriate call-in procedures and work with management to ensure appropriate staffing levels.

Q6: Can an employee stay home under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to avoid getting COVID-19?

A6: No. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) protects eligible employees who are incapacitated by a serious health condition or who are needed to care for covered family members who are incapacitated by a serious health condition.

Managing Absenteeism

Q7: Can a healthy employee refuse to come to work, travel, or perform other job duties because of a belief that, by doing so, he or she would be at an increased risk of catching COVID-19?

A7: The circumstances under which employees have a right to refuse to work are very limited. Refusing to do a job because of potentially unsafe workplace conditions is not ordinarily an employee right under the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Managers are encouraged to have a conversation with employees to discuss any concerns they have. Telework options should be explored, when applicable, and managers shall contact DAS-HR prior to any form of corrective action.

Q8: What should I do if an employee has a pre-existing condition and does not want to return to the workplace even if the employee is vaccinated?

A8: Employees are encouraged to have a conversation with their immediate supervisor to discuss any concerns. When appropriate, telework options could be explored. Managers shall contact DAS-HR prior to any form of corrective action.

Employees with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation to modify or adjust their job duties or work environment to ensure they are able to successfully perform the essential functions of their position. If an employee requests an accommodation, the appointing authority should contact DAS-HR for assistance in engaging in the interactive process with the employee.

Staffing

Q9: Can appointing authorities close a location or their agency because of COVID-19 concerns?

A9: If an appointing authority is experiencing an impact at a location due to COVID-19, please contact DAS for guidance.

Q10: Can an agency extend temporary employees beyond the 780-hour limit?

A10: Yes. Governor Reynolds signed an additional State Public Health Emergency Declaration which temporarily removes the 780 hour limit for temporary workers. The 780-hour limit will be applicable upon expiration of the Governor's State of Public Health Disaster Emergency.

Links to More Information

[COVID-19 in IOWA](#)

das.iowa.gov/human-resources

[Wellmark Coverage](#)

[FMLA](#)

[Doctor on Demand](#)

[COVID Recovery Iowa](#)