



COVID-19 Workplace Procedures for Employees



King County

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PURPOSE

This document provides information and resources to ensure staff, the public, and volunteers can more safely conduct business as they continue essential functions or return to work. This document will be updated as needed based on guidance from Public Health, Seattle & King County (PHSKC), Washington State, or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

The guidance in this document applies to Executive Branch agencies¹. There may be program-specific guidance provided by agencies as appropriate. Employees must comply with any program or department specific guidance provided by your agency.

Visit our [one-stop website for employees](#) for regularly updated health information, telecommuting resources, benefits updates, frequently asked questions, and more. This website can help to answer questions for King County employees about how their work is impacted by the coronavirus.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN THIS EDITION

These areas of these procedures have been updated and/or added:

- The section regarding **employees with symptoms, exposure, or a positive test** has been updated and clarified. Refer to the [Temporary COVID-19 Personnel Policy](#) for more details on scenarios regarding COVID-19 testing and required protocols.
- The section regarding **face coverings and masks** has been updated to reflect the [Temporary COVID-19 Personnel Policy](#).
- The section regarding **teleworking** has been updated significantly. New content discusses resources to support telework offices.
- The sections regarding **schedule flexibility, childcare, and self-care** are all new content.
- Minor changes have been made throughout and improve clarity and formatting. Some sections have been re-ordered for clarity.

¹ Executive Branch agencies include the Department of Assessments, Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention, Department of Executive Services, Department of Community and Human Services, Department of Human Resources, Department of Judicial Administration, Department of Local Services, Department of Metro Transit, Department of Natural Resources and Park, Department of Public Defense, Department of Public Health, Executive Department, King County Elections, King County Information Technology, and King County Sheriff's Office (the King County Sheriff's Office is administered by the King County Sheriff).

Other branches of King County government are District Court, King County Council, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and Superior Court.

ABOUT COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. Health experts are still learning more about how it spreads. Currently it is thought to spread:

- Through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- By touching a surface or object with the virus and then touching the mouth, nose or eyes

People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms, ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms can include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. This list is not all possible symptoms. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

It's important that everyone takes steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially to protect those who are more vulnerable. Steps you can take to prevent spreading the flu and the common cold will also help prevent COVID-19:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick especially if you are 65 or older or have an underlying health condition, like heart disease, diabetes, lung disease or a weakened immune system.
- Stay home while you are sick.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Wear a face covering which covers your mouth and nose when outside your home.

EMPLOYEES WITH SYMPTOMS, EXPOSURE, OR A POSITIVE TEST

IF AN EMPLOYEE IS SICK OR EXPOSED

If an employee has COVID-19 symptoms, the employee should not report to a King County worksite. The employee should stay home, contact their medical provider and their supervisor or human resources manager.

Refer to the [Temporary COVID-19 Personnel Policy](#) for more details on scenarios regarding COVID-19 testing and required protocols.

Anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms should get tested right away. Testing is available at no cost. Employees should contact their regular health care provider for advice and testing. If it is difficult for the employee to get testing at their usual health care provider, [Public Health's website has alternate testing locations](#).

HOW DOES AN EMPLOYEE KNOW IF THEY WERE EXPOSED?

In general, you need to be in close contact with a sick person to get infected. Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household as a sick person with COVID-19
- Caring for a sick person with COVID-19
- Being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for about 15 minutes
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a sick person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.)

Some people get COVID-19 even without a recognized exposure to a sick person. If an employee has illness symptoms, they should stay home and away from others. If an employee thinks they might have COVID-19, they should contact their healthcare provider to ask if they can be tested.

IF AN EMPLOYEE TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

The names of employees who test positive for COVID-19 are confidential. This is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees' personally-identifiable and medical information will be kept confidential to the extent possible. Refer to the [Temporary COVID-19 Personnel Policy](#) for more details on scenarios regarding COVID-19 testing and required protocols.

An employee who tests positive for COVID-19 should contact their human resources manager or email DHRCOVID@kingcounty.gov immediately after being notified of the test result.

Public Health will receive a report from the test location and will reach out to the employee to ask about their contacts and ability to isolate until they are no longer able to spread the virus.

Public Health will inform close contacts of the sick employee that they may have been close to someone with COVID-19.

If employees have questions about leave options, they should contact their human resources manager. There are several leave options for employees who test positive.

The employee's department should immediately coordinate with the Facilities Management Division or other building maintenance to secure an enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of the employee's workspace.

TELEWORKING

At the Executive's directive, teleworking is mandatory for all Executive Branch employees whose work allows for it through January 8, 2021. Normal eligibility requirements under the existing policy are suspended; however, teleworking still requires prior approval from the employee's supervisor. Employees who are teleworking must be available and responsive. Refer to the [county's telecommuting policy](#) for general guidance, and the [Temporary COVID-19 Personnel Policy](#) for modifications to the telecommuting policy.

Remote work has its challenges, including distractions in the telework location and setting up adequate and internet connected workspaces. The announcement that most schools will start remotely in fall of 2020 creates additional challenges. Employees caring for elderly or sick family members also are challenged while teleworking.

This guide contains a number of new and ongoing programs to help teleworkers manage during this difficult time.

During this transition period, some resources are available to help employees make the most out of their remote workspaces. Necessary furniture and equipment can be purchased prior to the end of 2020, and the county will provide computers and technology to support teleworking.

A designated work area is recommended for teleworking to reduce distractions or interruptions. If an employee's residence is not conducive to telework, the employee should contact their supervisor to arrange for workspace in a county facility.

The county will provide assistance, where needed, with equipment to support telework. This assistance may take four forms:

1. Taking equipment home from work
2. Purchase of home office equipment
3. Furniture, equipment, or supplies for a medical accommodation
4. Connectivity support

Any purchases related to setting up and operating a telework office must be approved by supervisors in advance, documented, and reported for reimbursement to the county.

EMPLOYEES HIRED BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2020²

These guidelines apply to employees hired before September 1, 2020 who anticipated working from county facilities and are now primarily teleworking. Federal COVID-19 reimbursement to the county may not be available after December 30, 2020 for furniture for teleworking spaces.

² Employees hired after September 1, 2020 whose work could primarily be telework will be hired with the condition that they either have an adequate home office space, internet access, and furnishings or are able to commute and use county office space. The county will supply necessary IT equipment and job-related tools.

OPTIONS RELATED TO TELEWORKING

The county will provide equipment to support telework where needed.

If an employee's residence is not conducive to telework, the employee should contact their supervisor and arrange in coordination with the Facilities Management Division for workspace in county facilities.

PURCHASE OF NECESSARY EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

As a result of COVID-19, employees whose work allows for it are teleworking. Expenditures associated with teleworking are eligible for federal COVID-19 reimbursement to the county through December 30, 2020. Any purchases related to setting up and operating a telework office must be approved in advance, documented, and reported for reimbursement to the county.

Employees can procure necessary office furniture and equipment through county supply contracts and/or purchasing cards (P-Cards) with supervisor approval. Purchases should be made through the standard work group protocol via blanket contracts or other vendors that include delivery to the telework site.

OFFICE FURNITURE, SUPPLIES, AND EQUIPMENT

With advance supervisor approval, employees may take work equipment and portable goods necessary for telework that do not require special movers. This includes computers, monitors, peripherals, cell phones, office supplies, chairs, and chair pads. Office supplies include items like pens, pencils, files, and paper. No other equipment or supplies may be taken home without advance supervisor approval.

If an employee does not have an adequate desk, chair, or other furniture necessary to set up a telework office, such items may be purchased with advance supervisor approval using existing county contracts or P-Cards. Supervisors can assist employees in obtaining necessary equipment within the established threshold.

Individual items of furniture or equipment, initially purchased for \$500 or less, often depreciate rapidly in value, and it is anticipated that the cost of recovery or disposal of such furniture would exceed its depreciated value. Therefore, employees who use county funds to purchase furniture for telework with an initial value of \$500 or less will be responsible for the disposition of such furniture when it is no longer needed and has been declared surplus by the supervisor and Fleet Services Division.

As of September 2020, the future usage of county office workspaces is undetermined, and the county is not moving existing office furniture to employees' telework locations with few exceptions.

FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT, OR SUPPLIES FOR MEDICAL ACCOMMODATION

Furniture or other equipment necessary for an employee's documented medical accommodation may, at the county's option, be moved from the workplace to the employee's telework location. The agency's human resources manager must review any employee requests to move existing office furniture. If an employee requires county furniture to be moved to their teleworking location due to a documented medical accommodation, the human resources manager will arrange for delivery of the furniture or equipment. In such cases, moving services will be provided by a county-identified moving service and the cost of the move will be borne by the requesting division.

CONNECTIVITY

Employees who do not have adequate internet access from their telework location may request, with advance supervisor approval, a county cell phone or other hot spot wireless internet connectivity equipment from KCIT.

If an employee's regular duties require enhanced internet capability to manage large data files, supervisors should first evaluate if it would be preferable to have the employee work in a county office. Telework is not preferred where the employee's existing internet, county cell phone, or other hotspot wireless internet connectivity equipment cannot accommodate regular work with large data files.

ADDITIONAL TELEWORKING RESOURCES

Please visit King County's [Working from Home website](#) for resources to assist employees including technical support, information to support work-life balance and well-being, and tips for productive virtual meetings.

For information on ergonomic resources and assistance while working remotely, please visit King County's [Ergonomic Evaluation website](#). If you need assistance with the ergonomics of your home workstation, first complete the self-assessment checklists on the website. If you have a medical restriction and/or require an accommodation related to your home workstation, please [request an ergonomic evaluation](#) (requires SharePoint login). The evaluation will be conducted via Skype or phone. If needed, equipment or furniture from your King County workstation may be approved for use at home.

SCHEDULE FLEXIBILITY, CHILDCARE, AND SELF-CARE RESOURCES

SCHEDULE FLEXIBILITY

King County now offers employees the option to flex their work hours where business needs allow for it.

Where permitted, an employee may adjust the time period in which they complete each day's required work hours to help them better manage the competing demands on their time. For example, instead of a standard 8:00 am to 5:00 pm work schedule, an employee may be permitted to adjust their schedule to 6:00 am to 10:30 am and 3:30 pm to 7:00 pm five days a week. Employees may also be permitted to adjust their schedule to work a different number of hours on each day of the week as long as they complete their regular 35- or 40-hour work week.

This option will not be appropriate for every employee or every function and will require the approval of an employee's supervisor. Any change to the schedule of an employee represented by a labor organization must be consistent with the relevant collective bargaining agreement.

If an employee would like to adjust their hours, they are encouraged to have this discussion with their supervisor. A form must be completed and approved by the employee's supervisor prior to beginning an adjusted schedule. After an employee begins an adjusted schedule, supervisors should conduct periodic reviews with the employee to evaluate the success of the arrangement.

For more information and the form, visit the [Human Resources page on accessing leave during COVID-19](#).

CHILDCARE, PARENTING, AND SELF-CARE RESOURCES

Teleworking with children at home is a new experience for most employees and can present its own unique challenges. King County's Making Life Easier program has produced a Parenting Toolkit called [You're Still Parenting Through a Pandemic: A Guide for Sustaining Yourself and Your Family in a Changing Landscape](#) (when prompted, enter username "King County"). In the guide, you will discover:

- How your EAP services can support you and your family in these times
- Resources for creative solutions and supportive practices for navigating the realities of working (from home or onsite), remote-learning, and childcare needs
- Tips for supporting remote learning at home
- Self-care practices, tips, and resources for you and your family

FACE COVERINGS AND MASKS

In light of the guidance contained in the Governor's proclamation, the Public Health Directive from the Seattle & King County Public Health Officer, county policy, and other regulatory standards, all employees must wear masks over their noses and mouths if they are likely to be in contact with another individual and distancing of six feet is not able to be maintained.

King County employees are required, at a minimum, to wear a cloth or disposable mask, substantially equivalent to the masks provided by the county. Some work activities require a specific type of mask. Members of the public are only required to wear a "face covering" consistent with health guidance. Face coverings include less effective coverings than the masks required for county employees.

WHY SHOULD EMPLOYEES COVER THEIR FACES?

Masks reduce the risk that individuals will spread COVID-19. In addition to limiting the spread of the virus by symptomatic people, evidence suggests that COVID-19 can be transmitted by individuals who do not have symptoms. Masks limit the release of infectious particles into the air when an individual speaks, coughs, or sneezes. They limit the inadvertent spread of COVID-19 while interacting with others.

WHAT KINDS OF MASKS SHOULD EMPLOYEES USE?

Because it is still important to conserve medical-grade or N95 respirators for health care workers, unless a health reason requires it, individuals should use county provided masks or substantially similar masks in the workplace. Bandanas, gaiters, buffs, vented masks, and face shields are not permitted substitutes for masks. Face masks must be worn properly in order to avoid contaminating the hands or face of the user. The county has cloth masks available for all employees to use in the workplace. Employees' supervisors will tell them if a specific type of mask is required for their job.

HOW DO EMPLOYEES GET CLOTH MASKS?

The county has cloth masks available for all employees to use in the workplace. Contact your supervisor to get masks. Individuals should use county-provided cloth or disposable masks or their own substantially similar masks in the workplace. Masks must be workplace-appropriate and cannot feature offensive images or content.

HOW IS A MASK PROPERLY WORN?

According to guidance from Public Health:

- Wash your hands before and after putting on a mask.
- Use the ties or loops to put your mask on and pull it off; avoid touching the front of the mask.
- Put on and remove your mask before you leave your home. Public transportation, elevators, and stairwells can be high-contamination areas.
- Wash and dry your cloth mask between each use and keep it in a clean dry place.
- Remember that masks offer only limited protection and are most effective when combined with hand washing and physical distancing.

Visit [Public Health's website](#) for more information on wearing a mask.

WHAT IF AN EMPLOYEE HAS CONCERNS ABOUT WEARING A MASK?

If an employee has a medical condition that impacts the employee's ability to wear a mask, they should contact their human resources manager. The county may not be able to reasonably accommodate a disabled employee's request that they be exempted from the requirement to wear a face covering if the employee works in an environment where social distancing is difficult and/or not wearing a mask creates a risk of exposing others.

We acknowledge that some individuals who are members of communities historically and currently discriminated against may experience anxiety and fear about wearing face coverings. King County is committed to maintaining a respectful, productive, inclusive and equitable workplace, and discrimination and other conduct that is inconsistent with that, will not be tolerated. In this unprecedented time, when individuals can be infected and contagious before or without symptoms and evidence suggests a significant number of infections may be transmitted this way, face coverings must be worn to prevent inadvertently spreading COVID-19 while interacting with others.

If an employee will be in close contact with the public and has concerns about being discriminated against while wearing a mask, they should speak to their human resources manager about ways to clearly identify themselves as a King County employee. However, even with identification, we fully acknowledge that the anxiety and fear for members of historically and currently discriminated against communities are real and these steps alone cannot change that. We, through your supervisor or human resources manager, are committed to working with you to make sure that everyone stays healthy and safe.

WHAT ARE THE EXCEPTIONS TO THE MASK DIRECTIVE?

Some employees do not need to follow this directive, including:

- Anyone with a disability that makes it hard for them to wear or remove a face covering
- Anyone who is deaf and moves their face and mouth to communicate
- Anyone who has been advised by a medical professional to not wear a face covering because of personal health issues
- Anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, or unable to remove the face covering without help

If one of these exceptions applies to you, please talk with your supervisor or human resources manager about being exempted from the requirement to wear a mask.

WORKPLACE PRECAUTIONS

First responders, mission-critical staff, and essential employees who cannot telework have remained in the workplace. As restrictions lift, additional employees may be returning to the workplace.

The county has established enhanced resources and cleaning protocols. Crews and vendors have been instructed to increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting key touch points and objects, including but not limited to:

- Doorknobs and handles
- Elevator buttons
- Handrails (stairwells and entries)
- Light switches and call buttons
- Restroom sinks, faucets, and stall door latches
- Countertops
- Commonly touched parts of kitchen appliances and vending machines

Public areas and elevators will include:

- Six-foot separation markers
- Social distancing and face covering requirement messaging
- Limits on elevator occupancy and cab markings for distancing

Hand sanitizers have been installed in common area lobbies and high-traffic public floors. In restrooms, touchless fixtures are being installed where possible.

SHARED RESOURCES

Employees should clean and disinfect shared equipment such as keyboards, mice, telephones and tools which should be done frequently and before and after each use. If wipes are not available, the employee should contact their supervisor. The Facilities Management Division (FMD) will clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in shared office workstations including tables, copy machines/printers, and doorknobs in facilities FMD manages. Do not share headsets.

Employees using shared vehicles must also clean and disinfect high touch areas before and after each use. This includes door handles, arm rests, steering wheels, commonly used buttons, consoles, gear shifts, seat belts, and hand brakes. Cleaning wipes will be placed in Fleet vehicles and Fleet Services will have INVERS/dispatch vehicles cleaned regularly but cannot do so after each use.

CARPOOLING

Whenever possible do not share a vehicle with people who are not members of your own household. If you must share a vehicle, follow these guidelines:

- Ensure everyone in the car wears a face covering.
- Limit the number of people in the car to as few as possible.
- Maintain distance between people as much as possible (ask passengers to sit in the back to create physical distance).
- Keep tissues and sanitizer in the car.
- Do not recirculate the air.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces.
- Increase airflow by putting the windows down.

EMPLOYEE SCREENING

All employees must follow public health advice regarding COVID-19 symptoms. Employees should not come to a workplace if they have symptoms. This self-screening is mandatory for all employees.

Depending upon the function, need, or changes in infection rates, employees returning to the workplace may be subject to different levels of screening.

Some workplaces will conduct daily on-site temperature and symptom screening, primarily in restricted access environments where it is difficult to maintain social distancing and as may be required by regulation or policy. Policy decisions to implement daily documented on-site screening will be made in conjunction with county leadership and labor relations.

Some workplaces will require employees to take their temperature and report any symptoms prior to coming to the workplace each day. This may include an online screening tool. Policy decisions to implement daily documented off-site screening will be made in conjunction with county leadership and labor relations.

Before implementing daily documented on- or off-site screening or reporting by employees, managers or supervisors of workgroups should work with department or agency leadership, county leadership, and labor relations. These requirements may trigger FLSA obligations.

Employees who refuse screening may be denied entry to the workplace. They may be subject to unpaid leave or disciplinary action.

STAY INFORMED

Visit our [one-stop website for employees](#) for regularly updated health information, telecommuting resources, benefits updates, frequently asked questions, and more. This website can help to answer questions for King County employees about how their work is impacted by the coronavirus.

Visit [Public Health's website](#) for more information on local directives, testing availability, and other resources. If an employee lives outside of King County, the policies that apply to the employee at home may not be the same that apply to the employee at their place of work. Check your local health department's website for more information.

COVID-19 HOTLINES

For non-medical questions about COVID-19, including compliance and business-related issues, contact the King County COVID-19 Business and Community Information Line (Monday – Friday) 8:30 am – 4:30 pm at 206-296-1608.

For general questions about COVID-19 in Washington State, contact the Washington State Novel Coronavirus Call Center at 800-525-0127.