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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** All Executive Branch Employees

**From:** Gerina D. Whethers, Secretary 

**Date:** March 10, 2020

**Re:** **Protocols for 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

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On March 6, 2020, the Governor issued Executive Order 2020-215, declaring a state of emergency regarding COVID-19, a respiratory disease causing illness that can range from very mild to severe, including illness resulting in death.

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that had not been previously identified in humans and can easily spread from person to person. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified the potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 both globally and in the United States as “high,” and has advised that person-to-person spread of COVID-19 will continue to occur globally, including within the United States.

In recognition of the fact that there are currently confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Kentucky with more expected, it is the goal of this memo to encourage all employees to take proper health precautions to prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. To further that goal, each agency shall adopt telecommuting plans, as outlined below, and essential services plans. Further, pursuant to the power under the state of emergency, all state employees will be granted additional state-paid sick leave as detailed in this memo.

**State employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 or who exhibit the symptoms of COVID-19 should not come to work.** Instead, these employees should telecommute or utilize their sick leave, as provided below. If you believe you have been exposed to this virus, you will be asked to self-isolate for 14 calendar days (to include up to ten (10) working days) and monitor for any symptoms of illness.

### **Telecommuting**

Employees showing symptoms whose job duties may be performed by telecommuting shall be allowed to do so under 101 KAR 2:095 after coordinating with supervisors. Telecommuting under this policy shall be liberally granted and encouraged even in the absence of observed symptoms based on a reasonable belief of exposure and risk. Furthermore, during the pendency of the COVID-19 state of

emergency, employees are encouraged to use telephone and video conferencing instead of face-to-face meetings as much as possible.

The fundamental principle is that the personnel regulations are to be construed with a view toward protecting our employees and their families while maintaining essential services to the public. For agencies impacted by high absenteeism, internal contingency plans shall be developed to ensure service delivery.

### **Additional Paid Sick Leave**

Up to ten (10) sick leave working days are to be granted to employees potentially exposed to COVID-19 or employees exhibiting symptoms. COVID-19 symptoms may include the following: fever; cough; shortness of breath.

**Exposed Employee:** Employees should consult the CDC website for updated information about their potential exposure to and risk of contracting COVID-19. Employees may also contact their local health departments, as necessary. Employees should report potential exposure to Human Resources (HR), so that risk to other employees may be assessed and the continuation of services to the public can be promoted.

**Employees who exhibit symptoms or are diagnosed with COVID-19:** It is critical that employees refrain from coming to work while they are experiencing the above symptoms.

**When Can Employees Return:** An employee who has potentially been exposed to COVID-19 and has self-isolated may return to work after 14 calendar days if they did not develop any symptoms or illness. If any employee has been ill, the CDC and DPH recommend that employees stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. If an employee is diagnosed and laboratory-confirmed with COVID-19, he or she will be required to submit two negative lab tests for the COVID-19 virus taken 24 hours apart before returning to work. These would be conducted by the employee's healthcare provider.

For more information about COVID-19, employees may call Kentucky's COVID-19 hotline, **1-800-722-5725**, or go to the website, **Kycovid19.ky.gov**. Additional credible sources of information are provided in the attached frequently asked questions. Additionally, employees may call **502-564-5460** for general guidance.

We understand that this is a rapidly evolving situation. Updates will be made as soon as practicable. **Please also see the attached Frequently Asked Questions for additional pertinent information.**

Attachments:

SHRM Stop the Spread of Germs at Work

When to Seek Care

Frequently Asked Questions