



## COVID-19 EMPLOYEE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

September 2, 2020

### PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is intended to provide clarity about employee policies, practices and procedures that may be impacted in response to COVID-19 and its potential impact to operations. If you have questions that are not answered in this document, please direct them to Human Resources / Risk Management (HRRM). This document will continue to evolve as we receive additional questions, as information progresses, and as the situation changes. Information is subject to change and the below guidelines are intended to be temporary.

### WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19?

Information on the Coronavirus can be found at the website for the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC).

**1. What are the symptoms of Coronavirus?**

Symptoms can include fever, coughing and shortness of breath. For additional information, see the [CDC website](#).

**2. When do symptoms appear?**

The CDC believes symptoms may appear between 2- 14 days after exposure to the virus.

**3. What people are higher risk of severe illness?**

**The following criteria is from the FAQ on the [CDC website](#)**

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People of any age with underlying health conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including
  - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
  - People who have serious heart conditions
  - People who are immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDs, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications,
  - People with severe obesity
  - People with diabetes
  - People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
  - People with liver disease

#### **4. What can be done to prevent the spread of the virus**

- Employees should follow the [CBJ COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines](#) to prevent virus spread at work.
- For additional information, see the [CDC prevention guidance](#).

#### **5. How does the virus spread?**

COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) for a prolonged period. Spread happens when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and droplets from their mouth or nose are launched into the air and land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. The droplets can also be inhaled into the lungs. Recent studies indicate that people who are infected but do not have symptoms likely also play a role in the spread of COVID-19.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. However, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. COVID-19 can live for hours or days on a surface, depending on factors such as sunlight, humidity, and the type of surface. Social distancing helps limit opportunities to come in contact with contaminated surfaces and infected people outside the home.

Although the risk of severe illness may be different for everyone, anyone can get and spread COVID-19. Everyone has a role to play in slowing the spread and protecting themselves, their family, and their community.

### **WORKING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

#### **6. Are employees allowed to telecommute?**

On March 23, 2020, during a “hunker down” period, CBJ made the decision to have as many employees as feasible telecommute from home per [Policy 20-02](#). By May 26, 2020, the City Manager’s Office indicated that most CBJ employees who had been telecommuting should return to the workplace. There are limited situations where telecommuting will still be approved on a temporary basis. If you believe telecommuting is appropriate for your situation, you and your supervisor should contact HR to discuss options. There may be designated “hunker down” periods in the future in which employees are encouraged to telecommute again.

#### **7. Can an employee continue to telecommute if they are nervous about working in workplace during the pandemic?**

In general, all CBJ employees should have returned to their normal work location. If an employee’s circumstances require additional consideration, an employee should discuss the situation with their supervisor and/or Human Resources to make alternate arrangements.

Supervisors should address leave requests on a case by case basis, being as flexible as the requirements of the position allow. Leave for essential employees may not be granted.

Employees who are at higher risk of severe illness should follow [CDC guidance](#). If a higher risk employee's concerns are great and they are not in an essential position to respond to the COVID-19 emergency or maintain essential public services, supervisors should discuss with Human Resources to see what options may be available. Telecommuting may be considered. If an employee who is at a higher risk has concerns about working in their position, but is in an essential position, then please contact HRRM. High risk employees may be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick leave. Refer to FAQ #14.

**8. Should facemasks be worn outside of work?**

The CBJ encourages our employees to follow CDC and the State of Alaska recommendations that you wear a cloth face covering in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. See [CBJ Resolution 2890](#) Urging the Use of Cloth Face Coverings.

**9. Should employees wear a face mask at work?**

Employees must follow the [CBJ Masking FAQs](#).

**10. Is the CBJ taking additional cleaning measures in the workplace?**

Normal routine cleaning continues to occur at all CBJ work sites. All workplaces are being provided with hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies. Work groups should discuss what additional cleaning measures are taking place in their workplace.

**11. What if I need to take leave for COVID-19 reasons but I don't have enough personal leave accrued?**

The Federal Government passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act on 3/18/2020 and part of this legislation includes the Emergency Family Medical Leave Expansion Act and the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act. Depending on your specific situation you may qualify for these leave benefits.

The CBJ has developed a [COVID-19 Leave policy](#) based on this new legislation regarding the Emergency Family & Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLA) and Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA). A frequently asked questions (FAQ) document about this new policy and Leave Request form can be found on the [CBJ Department of Human Resources & Risk Management](#) website.

**12. Can I Request and Use Donated Leave?**

An employee can request donated leave in accordance with 11 PR 110(b)(1). During the period of time that an emergency has been declared by the CBJ Assembly, the City Manager has allowed leave to be donated to employees with no leave for any reason

related to the COVID-19 emergency declaration. The [donated leave request form](#) can be filled out and emailed to [payroll.office@juneau.org](mailto:payroll.office@juneau.org)

**13. Is the CBJ providing paid administrative leave for employees who are self-quarantining because they have signs and symptoms of COVID-19?**

No, however, an employee may be eligible for personal leave or Emergency Paid Sick Leave (if qualified).

However, paid administrative leave may be requested for employees who are exposed to COVID-19 at work and are not able to work in the workplace or through telecommuting. Situations will be evaluated on a case by case basis. Paid administrative leave must be approved by the City Manager's Office.

**14. Is the CBJ providing paid administrative leave for employees who are told they cannot be at work because they have cold or flu symptoms?**

An employee who is told they may not be at work because they have symptoms of COVID-19 may be able to use personal leave, accrued compensatory time, or donated leave. An employee may be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick Leave if a health care provider directs or advises them to stay home, or otherwise advises them to quarantine themselves because the health care provider believes they may have COVID-19 or are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and are quarantining based upon that advice prevents an employee from working or telecommuting.

Paid administrative leave may be available to employees who are believed to be exposed to COVID-19 at work and are not able to work in the workplace or through telecommuting. Situations will be evaluated on a case by case basis. All paid administrative leave must be approved through the City Manager's Office.

**15. Does an employee have to get medical approval to return to work?**

An employee who has been diagnosed with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must obtain either a medical release from their medical provider or a release from the Division of Public Health prior to returning to work at a CBJ work site. Telecommuting from home can occur without a medical release, as long as the employee has made prior arrangements with their supervisor.

If an employee is returning to work following an illness that was determined not to be COVID-19, the employee may need to obtain a medical release if requested. At this time, the supervisor will work with the employee and HR to determine whether a medical release will be required, taking into account the known medical information, potential workforce risks, and the current ability to see a medical provider in Juneau.

## SCHOOL CLOSURES AND CHILDCARE

### **16. What happens if my child's school, summer care program or caregiver location is closed?**

Employees may be eligible for 12 weeks of Emergency Family Medical Leave and/or 80 hours Emergency Paid Sick Leave if telecommuting is not available and they meet the eligibility requirements. Refer to [COVID-19 Leave policy](#) for details on information about these leave benefits.

An employee may also use personal, accrued comp time, or donated leave if an employee's child's school is closed or place of care is closed and the supervisor approves the leave.

### **17. Can I bring my children to work with me?**

In general, you may not bring your child or children to the workplace with you. If you feel that you have a short term, temporary need for your child to be in the workplace with you, then you should seek prior approval from your supervisor and follow social distancing guidelines.

## TRAVEL

### **18. Should an employee travel during the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

Employees should be aware and comply with State of Alaska Health Mandates. These Mandates may change frequently as circumstances change around Alaska. The State of Alaska Mandates and Health Alerts can be accessed [through the State of Alaska Health Mandate website](#). A supervisor may discuss with an employee where they are traveling so that a discussion about return to work can occur prior to the leave for travel taking place.

Some employees providing essential services may be required to have their pre-approved leave cancelled during a time of a surge or potential surge in the pandemic. If you are an employee in this situation, please discuss with your supervisor whether you have a compelling reason to still take leave if your supervisor believes it should be cancelled.

### **19. What should employees do who return to Juneau after having traveled outside of Alaska?**

Any employee returning to Juneau after having traveled outside of Alaska must comply with [Health Mandate 10](#). CBJ employees should discuss their situation with their supervisor upon their return to Juneau or just prior to returning to Juneau. The following chart describes the various options under Health Mandate 10 for the employee regarding quarantine and testing:



(<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/SiteAssets/Pages/HumanCoV/TravelChart.pdf>)

If an employee has received one negative test result and is in the period of minimizing interactions and monitoring symptoms prior to the results of the second test, the employee and their supervisor should discuss the following options for the employee:

- a. Quarantine at home and take leave
- b. Quarantine at home and telecommute if feasible and approved by the supervisor
- c. Return to work if essential employee, practicing social distancing and masking at all times if unable to social distance because of duties.

If the employee is unable to obtain a test or is awaiting test results and is required to quarantine after travel, the employee may telecommute if feasible, or use accrued or donated leave during their absence.

**20. What should employee do who returns to Juneau after having traveling in Alaska?**

In accordance with CBJ [COVID-19 Risk Level Operational Mitigation Measures](#), employees who travel in state to areas that are at a Moderate to High COVID risk (at any point during the employee’s travel to the area) according to the State of Alaska COVID dashboard are required to follow out of state travel directives. If an employee is unable to telecommute and must take leave while awaiting test results from in state travel from a Moderate to High COVID risk area, then the CBJ may approve Emergency Sick Leave for this situation even though this quarantine is not required by State of Alaska Health Mandate 10.

If the employee travels to an area of Alaska that is not at a Moderate to High Covid risk level, then there are no restrictions for being at the work site.

**21. Should an employee who is scheduled to attend training outside of Juneau attend the training?**

Initially during the emergency declaration, all work related travel through May 31, 2020 was cancelled. All employees who are scheduled to travel prior to May 31, 2020 should work with their supervisor to cancel the training and travel. Those who are scheduled to travel after May 31, 2020 work closely with their Director, as most in-person training that requires travel is being cancelled by the training organization or the training may no longer be available due to CBJ budget cuts.

## HEALTH INSURANCE AND BENEFIT INFORMATION

**22. Will my health insurance be maintained if I end up in leave without pay (LWOP) status for COVID-19 related reasons.**

Normally, an employee who is not qualified under the Family Medical Leave Act and is in LWOP status would have to pay the employer portion of the health insurance premium to maintain health insurance. However, if you are an employee that ends up in LWOP status for COVID-19 related reasons and are concerned about maintaining your health insurance at the same employee cost, other leave benefits may be available to you which will include CBJ paying the employer portion of your health benefit premium. See information about special leave circumstances on [this webpage](#).

**23. What is the CBJ doing for benefitted employees to address medical care for COVID-19?**

The CBJ/BRH health plan has been amended to put some measures in place to ease the cost of obtaining care related to COVID-19.

- Prescription Benefits—Members will be able to fill their prescriptions early so they have the necessary medications on hand when they need it. This applies to prescriptions through the Express Scripts mail order program for a 90 day supply or through a local retail pharmacy for a 30 day supply. Members will be able to use this fill option one time.
- There will be no cost to our benefitted employees and families for laboratory diagnostic testing for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), influenza, respiratory panel tests, and COVID-19 and provider visits attributed to the testing (in *and* out of network).
- Pre-authorization of above diagnostic testing will not be required.
- Telehealth services are available to members without any cost shares for all in-network providers. Cost shares being waved: the part of healthcare costs that you have to pay, such as deductibles, coinsurance, and copays.

**24. What options are available to benefited employees besides going to the Emergency Room, Urgent Care or the employee's primary care provider for COVID-19 medical care?**

If an employee is questioning your symptoms and are unsure of whether or not to go to his/her doctor, there are two other options for her/him offered through the CBJ/BRH health plan: the Premera Nurseline & Teledoc services.

Members should set up their Teledoc account prior to having a need to use it. It is a quick and easy online process by going to <https://member.teladoc.com/premeraak>, scrolling down to "Setup your account" and providing the required information for you and your benefitted family members. You can also call Teladoc at 855-332-4059 for assistance.

The Premera Nurseline is available to all benefited employees and their dependents for answers to any health related questions & concerns. This service is free and confidential and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling **800-841-8343**. The 24-hour Nurseline is not a substitute for regular, scheduled care from your physician or healthcare provider.

If you do not have a primary health care provider, are unable to contact them, or your provider is unable to perform the testing, call the CCFR COVID-19 screening hotline, 586-6000, daily from noon to 6 p.m. Testing will be arranged if appropriate.

**25. What can an employee do who is feeling anxious about the Coronavirus?**

Get accurate information from the [CDC website](#), dialing 2-1-1, or using another reliable source. Benefitted employees and their family members can call the Nurseline 24 hours a day at 1-800-841-8343 to ask medical questions of a nurse. Finally, the Employee Assistance Program is available to all employees at the ComPsych® [website](#) or by calling a ComPsych representative at 1-800-295-9059. (Use the following company ID: CITYJEAP2).

Additionally, we have a new counseling app- TalkSpace- that allows you to connect with counselors nationwide. To use TalkSpace through our insurance, simply download the app on your phone or visit [this Talkspace website](#) by clicking on the link.

**WORKERS COMPENSATION**

**26. If I think I have contracted COVID-19 at work, is that covered under our Workers Compensation program?**

If you become sick with COVID-19 and you think that you were exposed to the virus at work or while on work related travel, you may be eligible for workers compensation benefits. Employees should inform their supervisor, and a workers compensation claim should be

filed online through [Electronic First Report \(eFR\)](#). Our workers compensation adjuster will evaluate each COVID-19 claim on a case-by-case basis and determine compensability.

## **FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE**

### **27. Does COVID-19 qualify for Family Medical Leave?**

There are no changes to the current CBJ Family Medical Leave policy regarding eligibility due to the COVID-19 virus. Employees may still qualify for unpaid Family Medical Leave under the CBJ Policy 19-01 if they meet the eligibility requirements and the condition qualifies as a serious health condition as defined in the policy. If an employee contracted COVID-19 it is possible they may qualify under the current policy.

In addition, the Federal Government has recently passed legislation that expanded the Family Medical Leave Act temporarily and added a new qualifying reason specifically related to COVID-19 that provides a paid benefit to eligible employees. This expanded benefit is addressed in the new [Emergency Family Medical Leave Policy](#).

### **28. What happens when an employee is caring for a Family Medical Leave qualifying family member?**

An employee who needs time off to care for a qualified family member may be eligible for Family Medical Leave if they meet the eligibility criteria under the current CBJ Family Medical Leave Policy 19-01. Existing Family Medical Leave processes should be followed.

The paid leave provided by the Emergency Family Medical Leave Expansion Act (see FAQ #11) provides an additional reason; however, it specifically provides a benefit for employees who cannot telecommute or work due to the closure of daycare or school for a child under the age of 18. Family Medical Leave questions should be directed to the Department of HRRM.

## **RECRUITMENT AND HIRING**

### **29. Will the CBJ continue to advertise vacancies and accept job applications?**

Recruitment for essential positions may still occur. Recruitment for non-essential positions may be postponed so that employees who are at facilities that are closed may be temporarily reassigned to these positions, in an effort to maintain current employees' pay and benefits. If an employee is loaned out to another Department please notify HR and Payroll.

### **30. Should hiring managers modify traditional in-person recruitment methods such as in person interviews and exercises?**

Yes, recommended social distancing should occur in recruitment and selection activities.