



## Temporary COVID- 19 Pandemic Employee Policy

Due to Durham County’s commitment to employee safety in light of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, effective immediately the following policies are applicable to all Durham County employees until further notice. Durham County will continue to monitor the situation and provide guidance as more information on the extent and severity of the outbreak becomes available.

**Effective Date:** March 16, 2020 – until further notice

**Objective:**

Durham County is working with Federal, State and Local authorities to ensure that measures are in place to address the evolving concerns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The County recognizes that COVID-19 may significantly impact the workforce. It is imperative that essential functions and services are available for our citizens and that the health and safety of our valued employees and their respective family also remain a priority.

Eligibility - all employees, contractors, relief and temporary full-time and part-time. However, the leave guidelines are only applicable to benefits eligible employees.

Wendell M. Davis, County Manager

Signature:

Effective Date: March 16, 2020

Revision Date: March 17, 2020

Revision Date: March 26, 2020

## **Emergency Situations**

The following policies are all subject to Durham County's policy that addresses emergency situations which states:

Essential Positions – Positions held by employees who provide services that are crucial to ensuring the health, well-being and safety of residents and County employees, as designated by the Department Director or County Manager. All positions are designated as essential in emergency situations.... In the event of emergency situations, all employees are deemed essential personnel and will be required to report to work or remain on the premises if directed. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Notwithstanding, in general, and at management's discretion, an employee may be asked to telecommute if the job or some components of it can be done off site without disruption to the flow of work and communication. Employees should not assume any specified period for telecommuting, and may be expected to return to regular, in-office work at any time. It is important to note that all Durham County employees are essential employees and can be recalled to the office. However, their in-person attendance at work may not be required during this COVID-19 emergency.

Employees providing direct emergency services and/or support services that interface with the public during the COVID-19 event or staffing the County's Emergency Operation Center are eligible for the County's 10% differential pay during the time period covered by the March 14, 2020 local emergency declaration. The differential pay must be authorized by your Department Director and General Manager.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) first responders will adhere to the Departmental and State guidelines for EMS. Contact your manager with questions.

## **Mandatory Closures**

Mandatory closures by Federal, State or Local authorities that direct employees to stay at home, those employees will telecommute if possible in coordination with their supervisors. Employees that cannot telecommute may receive emergency disaster pay until the mandatory closure is lifted.

## **Employee Wellness**

### **Disinfecting Your Workspace**

General Services will ensure a clean work environment, including the regular cleaning of objects and areas that are frequently used by the public, conference rooms, bathrooms, breakrooms, door handles, and railings.

All employees should take steps to reduce the transmission of communicable diseases in the workplace. Employees are reminded of the following:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.

- Cover your mouth with tissues whenever you sneeze, and discard used tissues in the trash.
- If possible avoid face to face contact with persons that are sick with respiratory symptoms.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched (cell phones, desk phones, keyboards, remote controls, countertops, refrigerator and door handles, and personal workspaces etc.).

### **Social Distancing and Telecommuting**

- Department Directors are encouraged to utilize telecommuting options, where feasible.
- Given the current state of technology and limited remote access to critical systems, immediate implementation of telecommuting arrangements may be delayed. However, employees may discuss arrangements to telecommute with their Department Directors to explore alternate telecommuting options.
- Department Directors are responsible for the approval or denial of telecommuting and for monitoring telecommuting necessity and productivity.
- It is the Department Director's responsibility to ensure the telecommuting arrangements are not abused.
- Cancel or postpone non-essential meetings, gatherings, workshops and training sessions.
- Use the telephone, video conferencing, email or instant messaging to conduct business as much as possible, even when participants are in the same building.
- If a face-to-face meeting is unavoidable, minimize the meeting time, choose a large meeting room, and sit at least 6 feet from each other if possible; avoid person-to-person contact such as shaking hands or hugging.
- Follow all Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines
- Effective March 16, 2020 by Executive Order of North Carolina Governor Cooper, all large gatherings of 50 or more people are prohibited.
- During this emergency, a special focus for telecommuting is encouraged for people who are vulnerable to COVID-19. NCDHHS indicates those at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are people: over 65 years of age, and individuals with underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes, or with weakened immune systems. Employees are encouraged to discuss their status thereto with their supervisors.

### **Staying Home When Sick**

Pursuant to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), employees are encouraged to:

- Stay home from work, school, and all activities when you are sick with COVID-19 symptoms, which may include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.
- Keep away from others who are sick.
- An employee testing positive for the COVID-19 should inform his/her supervisor of any guidance received from the Public Health Department related to himself/herself and others in the workplace. Additionally, the employee is required to contact Human Resources at [humanresources@dconc.gov](mailto:humanresources@dconc.gov), as additional steps may be required pursuant to the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Employees who utilize FMLA as a result of testing positive for COVID-

19 will not be allowed to return to work without medical clearance for their own diagnosis or for any family member for whom the employee has provided care (under the FMLA) as a result of a COVID-19 diagnosis.

- Limit close contact with others as much as possible (about 6 feet).
- If an employee has been exposed to someone that has tested positive for COVID-19, the employee must self-quarantine for 14 days as recommended by the CDC and cannot return to work until after the quarantine period is completed.
- Additional guidance as to self-care during this time please follow the CDC guidance at this site: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

According to Durham County's Leave Policy

- Employees not reporting to work must notify their supervisor and or another member of their management chain within thirty minutes of the start of the work shift.

## Employee Leave and School Closure

### Temporary Leave

- Employees that cannot telecommute should code leave as emergency disaster pay. Please contact payroll for coding instructions.
- Pending transferred sick leave will be awarded to those employees immediately.
- Donated leave will be allowed in accordance with existing policy.
- The Alternative Work Options (i.e. Telecommuting) Policy will be relaxed during this timeframe to ensure the continuity of services.
- Additional leave may be available contingent upon the passage of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

### School/Daycare Closings

If an employee is unable to arrange child care services while their child's school is closed due to the current state of emergency, the following applies:

- Employees that cannot telecommute due to school or daycare closings should code leave as emergency disaster pay. Please contact payroll for coding instructions.
- Children should not be brought to the worksite (includes field visits/assignments).
- Telecommuting during this period is strongly recommended. Department Directors are responsible for the approval of telecommuting arrangements. Thus, a formal written telecommuting agreement may not be necessary, but Department Director review and approval is necessary.
- At any point Department Directors may deny the use of emergency disaster leave to avoid any discontinuation of services.
- It is important to remember as previously stated in this policy that in the event of emergency situations all county employees are considered essential personnel and will be required to report to work or remain on the premises if directed. Due

to the anticipated duration of the COVID-19 incident, it is advised to the extent possible that employees make arrangements for child care to ensure that they are able to perform their duties as essential personnel.

## **Business Travel**

### **Business Travel Cancellation Procedures**

- If nonessential business travel has already been booked, please work with your Department Director or his/her designee and the Finance Department to properly cancel to receive an airfare and hotel refund or credit if applicable. Set up phone or online conferencing with clients or other business units to replace the in-person meetings, if possible. Please make sure your Department Director or his/her designee knows the status of all meetings cancelled due to this temporary suspension.

### **Essential Travel**

- All travel is suspended until further notice.

## **Personal Travel**

- "Personal travel" is defined as any travel outside the state of North Carolina that is not associated with education or work purposes. Temporary personal travel activities include visiting family and friends, traveling abroad and pursuing other personal interests.
- As all business travel is suspended until further notice, it is advised that all personal travel cease. However, employees who travel out of the state and/or country must check with Durham County Human Resources before returning to work and may be required to provide a doctor's clearance prior to returning to work.
- Supervisors are encouraged to check for updates with the CDC as they are regularly updating the website. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- Employees must report any personal travel to their supervisor.
- Employees who chose to engage in personal travel must self-quarantine for 14 days prior to returning to work. Employees may be required to code this time as vacation time.

## **Related Information**

- During this state of emergency all leave policies will be relaxed to allow employees to use any form of accrued leave to self-isolate.
- Please contact the Human Resources Department at the temporary email address [humanresources@dconc.gov](mailto:humanresources@dconc.gov) with any questions or concerns.