



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Return to Onsite Work

Frequently Asked Questions

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General Questions

Q. After our return to onsite work, what will happen if an employee who has been or is in the building is confirmed to have COVID-19?

A. If an employee reports to work and is sick or becomes sick, that employee will be sent home. If an employee has become sick with COVID-19 like symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, the employee will be directed to their own physician and asked to report their condition to the Office of Human Resources (OHR).

OHR will work with the employee and/or their supervisor to identify any work-related close contacts and will help to identify which areas need to be cleaned and sanitized. Fully vaccinated people who have come into [close contact](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html) with someone with COVID-19 should be tested 3-5 days following the date of their exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. They should isolate if they test positive. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

Depending on when the sick or confirmed individual was last in the building, the workstation of the individual will be sanitized. Additional cleaning will be done on a case-by-case basis in compliance with the Department of Treasury guidelines.

OHR will continue to provide daily COVID-19 email notification to all employees.

Q. Have the building ventilation systems been assessed and/or updated? If not, are there plans to update the ventilation system in the very near future?

A. The Department of Treasury issued guidelines for proper air quality and ventilation in the HVAC systems. The Office of Facilities and Support Services (OFSS) has coordinated with landlords of DCF leased buildings to confirm that the buildings comply with the Department of Treasury's guidelines for proper air quality and ventilation in the HVAC systems. Guidelines

included: increased ventilation by adjusting airflow settings, performing preventative maintenance, and changing filters of the HVAC systems. In addition, OFSS staff have conducted at least one walk through safety inspection of every DCF office location and are addressing issues as they are identified. Follow up walk throughs have been, and will continue to be, conducted as needed.

Daily Wellness Screening

Q. How is DCF screening the workforce as they come to work?

A. All staff, regardless of vaccination status, shall [self-screen](#) prior to reporting to any DCF work location or job assignment. Staff with any of the listed COVID-19 symptoms should immediately notify their Supervisor and OHR at DCFHumRes@dcf.nj.gov or (609) 480-1061 Monday – Friday, between the hours of 8:00 AM. and 4:00 PM. Employees who are not permitted to enter the worksite based on their answers to the questionnaire **cannot** return to the worksite until they have contacted OHR, received further guidance regarding medical documentation requirements, provided all required documentation and have been cleared to return to work by a healthcare provider.

Q. What happens if I have one or more COVID-19 symptoms? Will I have to take leave, or will I be able to work from home?

A. Employees experiencing one or more COVID-19 symptoms should immediately notify their Supervisor and contact the Office of Human Resources as directed in the [DCF COVID-19 Notification Protocols](#). Under certain circumstances, an employee may be able to work remotely.

Q. Can an employee be sent home from work if they are showing fever, cough, shortness of breath or other symptoms consistent with COVID-19?

A. If an employee is showing flu-like symptoms (e.g., fever above 100.4°F, cough and/or sore throat, body aches, headache, chills) or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath) their supervisor should direct them to leave work and contact OHR. If the employee appears too ill to drive, the supervisor may offer to call a family member to pick them up. If the employee asks for an ambulance or appears very ill, the supervisor should call 9-1-1.

Social Distancing

Q. How are staff expected to maintain social distance in the office, conference rooms, restrooms, kitchen and elevator when staff may not be vaccinated?

A. Individuals at the worksite must maintain at least six feet of distance from one another to the maximum extent possible. To maximize the distance between employees, DCF is staggering arrival and departure times, staggering break times, and is working with a vendor to install plexiglass barriers between low walled workstations to bring them up to the height of the highwalled workstations. It will take time to outfit all the offices, please be patient.

Q. What will our staff/team meetings look like (will we continue with Zoom/ MS Teams?)

A. In-person meetings, when necessary, are permitted as long as social distancing is able to be maintained and masks are worn at all times. If social distancing is not possible, activities such as case consultations, supervisory meetings and staff meetings should be held via remote technology. If an in-person meeting is deemed necessary, attendance must be limited to the number of attendees that maintains social distancing at all times. Managers may **NOT** require staff to attend in-person meetings and shall strive to facilitate attendance via remote technology. All employees must wear face masks during in-person meetings.

Masking

Q. When we all return in October, will wearing a mask all day be contingent upon being fully vaccinated/non-vaccinated?

A. No. Employees regardless of vaccination status will be required to wear a cloth or disposable face mask while in common spaces, including hallways, conference rooms, restrooms, kitchens and elevators. As is currently permitted, all employees may remove their mask when they are eating or drinking and when situated in a room alone.

Q. Can people take off their masks if they are 6 feet apart?

A. See above answer.

Q. What kind of face mask is recommended for use in DCF offices?

A. The CDC recommends wearing a face mask that has 2 or more layers of washable, breathable fabric, completely covers your nose and mouth, fits snugly against the sides of your face without gaps, and has a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top. The CDC does NOT recommend wearing masks that have exhalation valves or vents, which allow virus particles to escape, or single-layer gaiters.

Q. What if an employee cannot wear a mask due to health issues?

A. Consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) and/or the New Jersey Law Against

Discrimination (“NJLAD”), DCF will work to determine if a reasonable accommodation can be provided. Please contact the Office of Human Resource ADA office at DCF.ADA@dcf.nj.gov for additional information.

Q. If masks are worn, how will everyone’s identity ensure staff’s safety/protected from outsiders who try to enter the building?

A. As has always been the case, employees must display their state ID upon entering an office.

Workspace

Q. How can our work space be respected during our absence? (i.e. Staff needing to use a person’s office, chair, note pad, pen or work phone because their desk conveniently isn’t nearby).

A. Staff will be reminded that they should not enter another employee’s workspace without permission and shall only work out of there designated workstation.

Cleaning and Cleaning Supplies

Q. Will common touch point areas (including restrooms) be cleaned frequently throughout the day?

A. Yes. DCF will continue to provide supplemental cleaning services to regularly clean all high-touch areas, including the interior of state vehicles. Contracted custodial staff have been directed to enhance their routine cleaning efforts, including commonly touched surfaces, nightly and throughout the day.

Q. Will DCF provide masks, wipes, gloves and/or sanitizer?

A. Yes. Employees will have access to cleaning materials and PPE upon request. Employees should contact the assigned [PPE Coordinator](#) in their office. In addition, field staff will have access to “to go kits” that contain PPE and cleaning supplies.

Computer Equipment/IT

Q. Do I need to bring my computer back to the office on October 18?

A. Employees who were issued a desktop computer to work remotely shall keep the equipment home until further notice from your DCF Information Technology team. As noted below, staff will be assigned a desktop in the office in preparation for October 18. Employees who have been issued a portable device (tablet, laptop, etc.) shall bring those devices and necessary accessories to their worksites on October 18.

Q. How will we collaborate? Are the computers in Trenton setup with Teams, cameras, etc.?

A. In preparation for October 18, DCF Information Technology staff are deploying desktops to ensure that staff have access to a computer on that day. All computers will be equipped with Microsoft Teams. It is possible that the equipment that will be available on October 18 will not include a camera. Staff will be able to utilize the camera on their state issued cell phone. Technology needs will be reassessed through the end of October and into November.

Q. Can people get headsets?

A. The DCF Office of Information Technology ordered 5,000 additional noise cancelling headsets. OIT will work with cost center managers to coordinate distribution of the headsets.

Q. If there is to be a hybrid work model or a remote work option while subject to quarantine or displaying symptoms what computer equipment and access will be made available by DCF?

A. As noted above, employees who were issued a desktop to work remotely should leave that device at home when they report to onsite work. An employee who has been issued a laptop or tablet has the ability to bring that device to the worksite or home location. In each instance, the employee has a DCF issued device to use.

Under certain limited circumstances, DCF may permit **temporary** COVID-19 specific accommodations for employee issues that are outside the scope of ADA/NJLAD, where it is reasonable and does not adversely impact agency operations (for example, where an employee's child is required to quarantine for a temporary period because of COVID-19 exposure at school, if the employee can continue to perform all necessary job functions while teleworking). This temporary accommodation is not intended to be a substitute for in-person work for an extended period, including for those employees with longer-term childcare issues.

Use of Leave Time

Q. Current protocol asks staff to self-assess for symptoms of COVID. If a person has a symptom or symptoms, they are asked to not enter DCF buildings. What benefit time is to be used? What if a person is subject to a lengthy quarantine that is beyond their control (i.e. Co-worker/family member is exposed to COVID, etc.)?

A. If staff are sick, they need to use their personal benefit time. If you have COVID-19 symptoms, notify your supervisor, [contact OHR](#), and call your physician to get tested. OHR will notify you regarding the benefit time for COVID related issues.

Q. If I need to take time off for a vaccine appointment will I need to use my personal benefit time?

A. The Civil Service Commission and the Governor's Office have advised that COVID-19 leave time remains available through December 31, 2021. This includes leave time of up to one day (7 hours) for purposes of obtaining a COVID-19 vaccine or recovering from the potential effects of vaccination. Please contact OHR for more information and for authorization of COVID-19 vaccineleave.

Q. If my child's school closes due to a spike in COVID-19 cases, will I be able to work remotely, or do I utilize my own time?

A. Under certain circumstances, employees may be able to work remotely. For example, where an employee's child is unable to attend school for a COVID-19 related reason (i.e. quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure at school, temporary school closure, etc.) **AND** the employee can perform all necessary job functions while teleworking, an employee may be permitted to work remotely. Only the Office of Human Resources can approve remote work for COVID related circumstances. Employees must provide official documentation to receive approval from OHR. Please note, if an employee is NOT able to perform all necessary job functions, then the employee will be required to use personal benefit time.

Q. What happens if I need to provide care to a sick person or a quarantining person?

A. Employees should contact OHR to discuss their options.

Q. What happens if I need to stay home because I or a member of my family are ill for reasons unrelated to COVID-19?

A. As has always been the case, employees should notify their supervisor and use their accrued benefit time. For absences of 10 days or more, employees should contact OHR to discuss their options.

Human Resources

Q. What opportunities are there to assist me with returning to the office?

A. We know the routines established during the pandemic will change with a return to the office, 5 days a week. That's why at DCF, we are providing as many opportunities as allowable for staff to transition, including Flextime and supervisor-approved, staggered start and end times to the workday. These ranges can be helpful to employees that require extra time in the mornings or afternoons to tend to personal obligations. In addition, the state offers options, including ADA accommodations or Family Leave or Family Medical Leave for situations that require regular absences.

Q. What is the process for staff to request an ADA accommodation and how will those accommodations be messaged?

- A.** If an employee is unable to return to the office because of a disability, they may be entitled to an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) and/or New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (“NJLAD”). For more information, please contact DCF.ADA@dcf.nj.gov to connect with an ADA Specialist.

All ADA requests must be substantiated with a medical document stating: 1) the employee’s diagnosis, 2) work restrictions or recommended accommodations, and 3) the duration of the work restrictions or accommodations. Requests for accommodation will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Information about an employee’s disability and/or accommodation is confidential. DCF will not disclose that an employee is receiving a reasonable accommodation because this usually amounts to a disclosure that the individual has a disability. Except under certain limited situations, the ADA specifically prohibits the disclosure of medical information. This prohibits the agency from disclosing employee medical information to coworkers.

DCF is committed to assisting employees encountering difficulties in the workplace. Many of the workplace issues encountered by employees are personal, and it is the DCF's policy to respect employee privacy. There is nothing prohibiting an employee from disclosing their own disability and/or accommodation.

Vaccines

Q. Will staff be required to be vaccinated as a condition of return to office?

- A.** Governor Murphy announced that all New Jersey State workers will be required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or undergo regular testing. Getting vaccinated is the safest way to build protection for you, your loved ones, your co-workers and your entire community. At this time, all staff must be vaccinated or submit to weekly testing. We strongly encourage all staff to get vaccinated.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and highly effective at preventing you from getting sick. They are one of the most important tools to ending the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly encourage everyone 12 or older to receive a COVID-19 vaccine—you will face no out of pocket costs to receive the vaccination. You can use the [NJ Vaccine Appointment Finder](#) to find available vaccination appointments at one of the 1,600+ vaccination sites in the state. Pop-up COVID-19 vaccination events, mobile vaccination clinics, and other vaccination events are being held across New Jersey- find an event near you at our [COVID-19 Community Calendar](#). The Vaccine Call Center is also available from 8 am to 8 pm to help you book an appointment and answer questions about the vaccine. Learn more about vaccination at the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub at: [COVID-19 Vaccine \(nj.gov\)](#).

Information about testing will be forthcoming.

Q. I have been reading that the COVID-19 vaccines' protection against infection wanes over time, and that with the highly contagious delta variant spreading rapidly, public health officials are starting to see evidence of reduced protection against mild and moderate disease. How will DCF keep its staff safe?

A. The safety of our employees has been and will continue to be our paramount concern. In preparation for our return to office, DCF published [Guidance](#) to assist employees who are returning, or have returned, to DCF worksites. The Guidance addresses, among other things, expectations for daily health monitoring, social distancing, face masks, and supplemental cleaning. If you have not yet done so, it is suggested that employees get vaccinated against COVID-19 and [receive a booster shot](#), if applicable.

Do not come to work if you are not feeling well, maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others whenever possible and wear your mask in all common areas and where you cannot maintain a minimum of 6 feet distance from others. Your office PPE Coordinator has cleaning supplies for you to use to wipe down your individual workstation and all high touch points in the offices are being wiped down multiple times a day. We all have a role to play in keeping each other safe. Follow the Guidelines and be patient and respectful with each other as we work through this challenging time of transition.

Employee Rights

Q. What are my rights and protections as a worker?

A. Federal and state law entitle employees to a safe and healthy workplace. To learn more about safety requirements, worker rights and protections and how to report safety violations click [here](#).