



**November 20, 2020**

At the November 20, 2020 all staff call, Dr. Laura Taylor from the New Jersey Department of Health, joined us to talk about the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide crucial information about how we each can take steps to remain safe and healthy. Over 1,500 DCF staff joined that call and a number of the participants asked questions about a variety of topics including testing, vaccines, continuation of remote work, the protocol for reporting a COVID-19 exposure or a positive diagnosis, quarantine and isolation requirements.

### **Notification Protocols**

Many of you asked for clarification related to the Notification Protocols. If you have been directly exposed to or diagnosed positive with COVID-19, you should immediately notify your supervisor and the Office of Human Resources (OHR). When you call, the OHR staff will ask a series of questions including the date you were last in the office, where you were in the office and any staff with whom you may have come into contact. Based on the responses to those questions, HR staff do two things: Advise any staff with whom you may have had close contact; and Advise Office of Facilities and Support so that steps can be taken to clean the locations you visited and any state vehicle that was used. Cleaning is conducted pursuant to New Jersey Department of Treasury, CDC, NJDOH and PEOSHA guidelines. If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, you will be required to isolate for 10 days. Isolation and precautions can generally be discontinued 10 days after symptom onset and resolution of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and with improvement of other symptoms.

If you have been in **close** contact, defined by the (CDC) as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period\* starting from 2 days before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated, with someone who has COVID-19 or who has been directed by a health care provider or local board of health to quarantine, OHR will direct you to quarantine.

If you have any questions about this process or about guidance you have received from OHR, please call (609) 480-1061 or (609) 480-2735 for further clarification.

### **Travel**

On November 25, 2020, Governor Murphy issued a statement strongly discouraging all non-essential interstate travel. Residents returning from **any U.S. state or territory** beyond New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware should self-quarantine. On Monday, December 7, 2020, the New Jersey Department of Health updated its [travel and quarantine restrictions](#) as follows:

People traveling for essential purposes, including work, do not need to quarantine. Essential travel would include, for example:

- Individuals traveling to and from the state for work.
- Individuals traveling to and from the state for medical reasons, including individuals providing comfort and support to a patient.
- Military personnel traveling to the state by order or directive of a state or Federal military authority.
- Individuals traveling to comply with a court order, such as child custody.

Travelers and residents returning from **any U.S. state or territory** beyond the immediate region (New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware) should self-quarantine at their home, hotel, or other temporary lodging, following [recommendations from the CDC](#):

- If travel is unavoidable, travelers should consider getting tested with a viral test (not an antibody test) 1-3 days before the trip and again 3-5 days after the trip.
- If travelers test positive, they should **self-isolate for at least 10 days and should postpone any additional travel during that time.**
- Even if travelers test negative, they should **quarantine for a full 7 days after travel.**
- If testing is not available (or if the results are delayed), travelers should **quarantine for 10 days after travel.**

The advisory is no longer specific to certain states. Because of the rising number of case counts across all states, there is an increased risk of spread of COVID-19 upon return from any travel.

The self-quarantine is voluntary, but **compliance is expected.** Travelers arriving from areas with increasing COVID-19 cases may wish to postpone their travel to the region if they are unwilling or unable to follow the quarantine advisory. Individuals should leave the place of quarantine only to seek medical care/treatment or to obtain food.

Please note that this advisory does not apply to individuals:

- Who are returning to New Jersey after traveling outside of the state for **less than 24 hours** or those traveling to New Jersey for less than 24 hours - *Even where travel is less than 24 hours, however, individuals are still discouraged from engaging in non-essential travel to other states to the extent possible.*
- Who are in transit through the state to another destination, provided that the time spent in the state is only the amount of time necessary to complete the transit, make use of travel services, such as a highway rest stop, or make necessary travel connections.

This includes travel by train, bus, car, plane and any other method of transportation.

**When an employee returns from out-of-state travel, they are required to:**

- 1) notify their supervisor**
- 2) reach out to the Office of Human Resources for further instructions.**

- The Office of Human Resources can be reached via email at [DCF.HumanResources@dcf.nj.gov](mailto:DCF.HumanResources@dcf.nj.gov) or by phone
- **Phone between the hours of 8am to 7pm**
  - **609-480-2735**
  - **973-590-4636**
  - **609-947-7022**
  - **609-480-1061 between 8am and 4pm (ONLY)**

The expectation is that staff who are working remotely are working from their primary home. If they wish to work elsewhere, they must obtain permission from their Cost Center Manager and notify the Office of Human Resources. If staff are traveling for non-work related purposes, they will be required to utilize their personal benefit time.

### **Remote Work**

COVID-19 will likely have permanent effects on the way we work. The Commissioner announced remote work will continue for most staff through June 2021. At this time, we don't know if remote work will continue beyond that time. It will depend upon a number of factors, including operational needs.

### **Fieldwork**

The population that DCF serves may need us now more than ever. Within the scope of DCF's core functions, staff are responsible for performing field work which includes, but is not limited to responding to child abuse/neglect referrals, responding to requests for child welfare services, in-home visits and overall ensuring the safety and well-being of the families served as well as our youth in congregate care programs. The nature of our work does not allow for the ability to exclusively meet the family's needs remotely.

Without a doubt, the COVID-19 global pandemic has impacted staff professionally and personally and DCF has put provisions in place to ensure that staff have ongoing and updated information on how to proceed safely with their work duties.

Some of these activities include:

- the weekly All Staff meetings hosted by the Commissioner;
- the development of PPE coordinators in each of the local offices;
- the issuance of PPEs to be utilized while in the field;
- the DCF flex time policy;
- Porter cleaning services for offices and state vehicles;
- Technology resources; and
- Remote work protocols.

I encourage you to visit the DCF website where you will find a host of resources for DCF staff. Some of the links to these resources are provided below:

- [Return to the Field Guidance](#)
- [Health & Safety Guidance](#)
- Updated - [Guidance for CPP Staff and DCF Contracted Visitation Providers on Family Visits](#)
- Updated – [Close/Casual Contact Notification Protocols](#)

## **PPE**

We received some questions relative to the use and availability of masks. As you know, the [CDC recommends](#) that people wear masks in public settings, like on public and mass transportation, at events and gatherings, and anywhere they will be around other people. We expect all staff to wear a mask while they are in the office and in the field. For additional information, please review the [DCF Health and Safety Guidelines](#). If you forget your mask, there is a supply available at all open DCF office locations.

Note: According to the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#), 3D-printed PPE can be used to provide a physical barrier to the environment. However, 3D-printed PPE are unlikely to provide the same fluid barrier and air filtration protection as FDA-cleared surgical masks and KN95 respirators. The CDC also has recommendations for how to [optimize the supply of face masks](#). It is important for you to know that all PPE is obtained through the New Jersey State Police Office of Emergency Management and only items approved by the FDA are purchased for distribution.

## **COVID Testing**

The NJ Department of Health encourages state staff to be tested for COVID-19. At this time, staff are encouraged, but not required, to be tested. [Testing locations](#) are updated by the New Jersey Department of Health every Friday.

## **COVID Vaccines**

The federal CDC has published an [interim playbook](#) providing government jurisdictions direction on how to implement a COVID-19 vaccination program. DOH has convened a large team including representatives from the Departments of Children and Families, Health, Human Services, Community Affairs, Labor and Workforce Development, Military and Veteran's Affairs, Corrections, and Education as well as the Office of Higher Education, the Port Authority, and New Jersey Transit to identify the critical populations that will be part of the first, second and third wave of vaccine distribution. As more information becomes available, we will share it with you.

I hope you find the above information helpful. If you have questions, please direct them to [askdcf@dcf.nj.gov](mailto:askdcf@dcf.nj.gov).