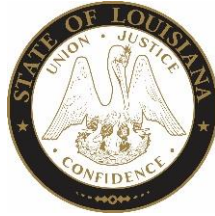


Office of the Commissioner
State of Louisiana
Division of Administration

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



JAY DARDENNE
COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATION

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 29, 2021

TO: Cabinet Secretaries, Undersecretaries, Elected Officials and HR Directors

FROM: Jay Dardenne
Commissioner of Administration

RE: New COVID-19 Guidance

Data compiled by the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) indicates that positive tests, hospitalizations, patients on ventilators, and deaths due to COVID-19 are on the rise at an unprecedented rate. Daily positive case reports over the last week have been the highest since February. Louisiana has the highest per capita growth of COVID-19 cases in the nation. This has resulted in the White House designating Louisiana as a "state of concern". The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) attributes this surge to the rapid spread of the Delta variant and the large number of unvaccinated persons in our state.

State agencies remain fully operational. State offices are open to the public. All offices are to be adequately staffed to provide customary services, including in-person services, during normal business hours. Agency heads are to identify employees whose physical presence at work is required for health, safety and operational needs (essential employees). Management personnel are to give special attention to identifying employees whose job duties cannot be remotely performed. These employees are required to report for duty as directed. Supervisory personnel must ensure accountability for in-office and remote workers by implementing protocols for monitoring attendance, performance, and productivity.

We immediately need to focus upon mitigation measures to stem the spread of this deadly virus. Updated guidance from CDC and LDH advises that this can be accomplished through implementation of masking requirements, physical distancing, workplace accommodations, testing, and increasing the vaccination rate. This is a fluid situation, the duration of which continues to be uncertain. As we address the spread of the virus, additional measures may become necessary. We cannot control our employees' off-duty and off-premises behavior, but we can reduce the likelihood of contagion in the workplace by implementing safety protocols. Compliance with the following strikes a balance between protecting the health and welfare of our workforce and maximizing employee performance and productivity.

- **Masks** – State employees in the executive branch are required to wear masks upon entering state buildings and while in common areas of the building – halls, stairways, elevators, restrooms, breakrooms, conference rooms, etc. This mandate also applies to visitors to state office buildings. Masks may be removed while working in the employee’s regular private work space as long as physical distancing is possible. Compliance is required regardless of vaccination status.

- **Physical Distancing** – This requirement (at least 6-foot distance in personal interactions) is critical in view of the manner in which this virus is primarily spread (breathing, talking, coughing, sneezing, laughing, and singing). This mandate applies to employees and visitors to state office buildings, regardless of vaccination status.

- **Workplace Accommodations** – Agencies need to review and modify, as warranted, current business practices to limit personal interactions and minimize unnecessary contact in the workplace. The following workplace protocols should be implemented:
 - Require teleconferencing and virtual meetings where possible
 - If required, limit the duration of in-person meetings, and require participants to wear masks and physically distance
 - Require employees to limit in-office socializing and congregating in common areas
 - Limit business travel to only that required and encourage employees to limit personal travel
 - Limit elevator occupancy to two persons
 - Require ill and symptomatic employees (regardless of vaccination status) to remain at home or leave the workplace
 - Require employees who test positive for COVID-19 or are exposed to contagion to contact Human Resources for isolation instructions and to initiate the contact tracing process
 - Require employees (regardless of vaccination status) to test for COVID-19 when symptomatic or exposed to possible contagion
 - Require employees (regardless of vaccination status) to isolate for the duration designated by CDC when symptomatic or upon testing positive for COVID-19
 - Require employees to notify Human Resources if a household member tests positive for COVID-19 (required by Proclamation #JBE-132).
 - Encourage employees to use recommended hygiene practices
 - Provide hand sanitizers for use by employees and visitors
 - Avoid handshakes, hugs, and touching frequently used objects/surfaces

- Avoid sharing cellphones, telephones, computers, work areas and work papers
- Install plexiglass or other shields in reception and public facing areas
- Clean and sanitize employee workspaces and common areas upon confirmation of contagion
- **Work Schedules** – To facilitate the ability to physically distance and reduce the scope of exposure to contagion in the workplace, the Division of Administration has implemented a hybrid work schedule for employees authorized to work remotely. This work schedule serves to maximize productivity, provide continuity of supervision, and enhances accountability. Due to operational demands and staffing requirements, this schedule may not satisfy the needs of your agency; however, it provides a model upon which to develop your own staffing plan.
 - **Regular Work Schedule** – The following employees are required to work in-office five 8-hour days each week:
 - Executive management, administrators, section heads, directors, managers and supervisors. This will maximize management personnel’s ability to ensure accountability and productivity, and provide direct supervision and guidance to subordinate employees
 - Essential employees – These employees, designated by management, are regularly required to work for health, safety or operational reasons during office closures, storms, crisis situations, etc.
 - New hires – Employees who have worked in their current positions less than six months, thus requiring ongoing orientation, training and direct supervision
 - Employees whose jobs cannot be remotely performed. This determination is a collaborative process involving the employee’s direct supervisor, section head and Human Resources. These employees will report for in-office duty as directed
 - **Hybrid Work Schedule** – Employees are required to work in-office a minimum of 2 days each week, with the remaining days to be worked remotely. The selection of the in-office days is to be made by the employee’s direct supervisor upon consideration of staffing needs, supervision required, etc. Employees are required to work from home. Remote work is to be performed during the same hours as the employee’s in-office schedule. Any deviation in work location or schedule requires express supervisory approval.
- **High Risk Conditions** – CDC has identified medical conditions which increase an employee’s risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Employees with high risk conditions may request special consideration by submitting an Exemption Request to Human

Resources. Each such request will be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Any deviation from the employee's designated in-office work schedule will include an evaluation of the ability to remotely perform required job duties.

- **Testing** – Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases, compliance with the following updated guidance from LDH is required:
 - Everyone, regardless of vaccination status, is required to immediately test if experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
 - Everyone, regardless of vaccination status, is required to immediately test after a known or suspected exposure to COVID-19
 - Anyone testing positive for COVID-19 is required to immediately quarantine for the duration of time recommended by CDC
 - If a test result after experiencing symptoms or exposure is negative, employees are required to retest between 5 and 7 days post-exposure
 - Anyone, regardless of vaccination status, developing symptoms of COVID-19 at any time is required to immediately test and quarantine pending test results
 - Fully vaccinated employees are not required to quarantine if asymptomatic and test results are negative
 - Isolation:
 - Anyone who tests positive and is symptomatic is required to isolate for at least 10 days from the date symptoms first appeared, symptoms are improving, and at least 24 hours have passed with no fever without fever-reducing medication
 - Anyone who tests positive, but is asymptomatic, is required to isolate for at least 10 days from the time the test sample was collected
- **Vaccinations** – COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in reducing (but not eliminating) the chance of contracting the virus, of being severely ill or dying, and transmitting the virus on to someone else. CDC and LDH report that 99.2% of all deaths attributable to COVID-19 are in unvaccinated people, meaning that the available vaccines are effective against the COVID-19 variants, including Delta, the dominant strain in Louisiana. I urge you to encourage your employees to vaccinate as soon as possible. Leave for this purpose is available under the Civil Service Rules.

Attached is information provided by the Office of Group Benefits regarding insurance coverage for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

LDH advises that employees can call the COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline at 1-855-453-0774 to get their vaccine questions answered, speak directly with a medical professional, find a nearby provider, or schedule a vaccine appointment. The Hotline is open 7 days per week, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Monday-Saturday, and 12:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. on Sunday. In addition, you can locate a vaccine site near you by clicking on <https://ldh.la.gov/covidvaccine-locations>.

In addition, if your agency has a need for regular or weekly testing, your Human Resources Director can engage a contracted medical team to collect samples at your office location for timely processing at the Office of Public Health Lab. For more information, please contact Dine Butler, the OPH Statewide Testing Coordinator, at dine.butler@la.gov