Coronavirus (COVID-19) FAQs for Employees

COVID-19 Exposure
Our priority is the safety and well-being of our employees, their families and customers. If a situation arises, all proper notifications will be given to employees who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 consistent with directions and recommendations from the Florida Department of Health.

I don’t feel well but don’t want to go to a doctor for an office visit. What other options do I have?
Contact NurseLine to speak with a UnitedHealthcare nurse 24/7 by calling (888) 478-4752, logging in at myuhc.com, or using the UnitedHealthcare App. Another option is to talk with a doctor by phone or video 24/7 with a Virtual Visit. Select from the following providers:
- Teladoc: Use the UnitedHealthcare app or website at myuhc.com, visit the Teladoc website at www.teladoc.com or call (800) 835-2362.
- Doctor on Demand: Visit www.doctorondemand.com or call (800) 997-6196.
- Amwell: Visit www.amwell.com or call toll-free (844) SEE-DOCS (733-3627).

What if an employee begins to experience COVID-19 symptoms, i.e. fever, cough, or shortness of breath, while at work?
The employee should:
- Speak with their supervisor or manager in a safe, quiet area, or on the telephone about the situation. To maintain a level of calmness and allow correct course of action, employees are discouraged from making announcements of a possible infection to large groups of employees.
- Follow your supervisor or management’s direction about leaving the worksite.
- Do not report to work when sick and follow established call-out procedures.
- Call your healthcare provider or the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) hotline to discuss your situation and obtain medical advice. The FDOH, COVID-19 Call Center is available 24/7 at (866) 779-6121 or email COVID19@flhealth.gov.
- Follow appropriate healthcare provider directions.
- Stay away from others and practice social distancing and good personal hygiene in accordance with current recommendations (https://floridahealthcovid19.gov) and your healthcare provider’s instructions.

What if an employee believes they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, but the employee is not experiencing related symptoms?
- If an asymptomatic employee believes they may have come in contact with an infected person, they should contact their supervisor immediately and advise them of the situation. That employee should also contact the Florida Department of Health to discuss their potential risk factors and obtain direction about any further steps that should be taken. Employees are discouraged from making announcement of a possible infection to large groups of employees.
- If an asymptomatic employee calls their supervisor and notifies them that they are required to stay home in quarantine because they were a contact of a confirmed case, the contacts they had
at work are considered “contacts of a contact” and therefore would not meet the current eligibility for testing. These “contacts of a contact” are not required to be in quarantine and should be permitted to continue to work, following recommendations for social distancing as appropriate.

What if an employee has been exposed to a family member who may be infected?
- If an asymptomatic employee is contacted by a local health department to be notified that they are a contact of a confirmed case, they will be required to be under mandatory quarantine or precautionary quarantine in their home, depending on if contact was close or proximate respectively, following the guidelines provided by the CDC.
- Any spouse, children or other household members, assuming both they and the individual under quarantine are asymptomatic, are considered a “contact of a contact” and therefore are not required to be in quarantine. They can go to work or engage other activities following recommendations for social distancing as appropriate.

What if an employee hears about a coworker that may be sick with COVID-19?
If you have information about a possible infection, please share the information privately with management only so that proper steps can be taken and to avoid causing anxiety among other staff.

Absence/Leave Time
Will my absence due to COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms or illness be considered unscheduled?
As has been the practice during times of increased flu activity, effective December 22, 2019, leave taken for flu and flu-like illness is considered scheduled leave. If you do not feel well, you should not come to work. Absences due to suspected COVID-19 symptoms should be treated in this same way.

Will my supervisor require a doctor’s note?
This is determined by your Appointing Authority. Please ask your supervisor if a doctor’s note is needed. For departments under the County Administrator, doctor’s notes will not be required from employees for flu and flu-like illnesses (including COVID-19).

If an employee stays at home to take care of a household family member who is experiencing COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms or illness, would this also fall under scheduled leave?
The decision of when to permit use of scheduled leave resides with each Appointing Authority. For departments under the County Administrator, if an employee stays at home to take care of a household family member who is experiencing COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms or illness, that will count as scheduled leave.

Please note that just signed Families First Coronavirus Response Act will impact this. We are working on implementation of the Act with appropriate parties. (3/19/20)

Now that schools are closed, what are our childcare options through the County?
If you are not able to find alternate child care due to school closures, there is an option of taking annual leave. In accordance with UPB Personnel Rule 4 - Time Off, the use of leave without pay may be requested after all forms of accumulated or gained leave have been exhausted (with the noted exceptions).

To care for well children due to school being closed, employees can use annual leave, floating holiday or personal days. If they run out of paid time, they can go on unpaid leave or talk to their Appointing
Authority about potential administrative leave.  **UPB Policy #12: AFIN: A Friend in Need Program** doesn’t apply in this situation.

*Please note that just signed Families First Coronavirus Response Act will impact this. We are working on implementation of the Act with appropriate parties. (3/19/20)*

**Can an employee request Leave Without Pay (LWOP) without expending all leave balances?**
Yes. As stated in **Rule 4, Time Off**, all forms of accumulated or gained leave shall be exhausted prior to the request and use of leave without pay, except as provided in the Pinellas County Family Medical Leave Act Handbook (**FMLA Handbook**); in a Declared Emergency as provided in **Rule 3**; or approved by the Appointing Authority. It can be LWOP based on the Appointing Authority’s discretion.

**What if an employee has exhausted all paid leave but cannot come in to work due to experiencing COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms or illness?**
The Friend in Need program may be a helpful resource for those challenged with the situation described. The **UPB Policy #12: AFIN: A Friend in Need Program** is a voluntary program through which an eligible employee may choose to assist eligible fellow employees in times of need by permitting person-to-person leave donation as defined within the policy. Please discuss your situation with your supervisor.

**Telecommuting**
**What are the rules about telecommuting?**
Appointing Authorities that want to allow, or require, telecommuting will communicate options and expectations for those arrangements. View the **BTS Remote Workforce Guide** (in SharePoint).

**Travel**
**Should work-related travel plans for conferences be cancelled?**
Please note that management can require or excuse work-related travel (i.e. employees scheduled to fly to a conference) at their discretion, as authorized by their Appointing Authority. Management can require employees to notify them if they will be traveling for personal reasons to high-risk areas, or plan to be in contact with someone that has been in a high-risk area.

**If I return from vacation, do I report to work?**
Speak with your supervisor about accommodations prior to and after your travel plans. This is a fluid situation and it is important to check the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** and **Florida Department of Health’s** travel guidance.

**Benefits**
**Can I refill my prescription early?**
If needed, Express Scripts is waiving early refill limits on 30-day prescription maintenance medications for health plan members. If a pharmacy has any issues, please ask them to contact the Express Scripts help desk at (800) 922-1557.

**Are employees eligible for Short Term Disability (STD) benefits related to COVID-19?**
The County’s short-term disability benefits (STD) are administered by The Standard. According to The Standard, individuals whose claim is solely due to being placed in quarantine or isolation will likely not be eligible for STD benefits as they would not meet the policy’s Definition of Disability. If the individual has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or other evidence of disability, she/he may be eligible,
depending on the specific facts of the claim. For more info, contact The Standard at (855) 290-9479 from 8 am to 8 pm M-F or email absence@standard.com.

Reminder, FMLA is to care for employees or their immediate family member for a covered illness, while STD covers only the employee due to illness or disability. If the employee is out caring for a sick child, spouse, parent or due to their own illness, they can apply for FMLA. The Standard will make the determination of whether their situation should be covered. A Friend in Need Program could potentially assist, if they meet the criteria and have no paid leave.

*Please note that just signed Families First Coronavirus Response Act will impact this. We are working on implementation of the Act with appropriate parties. (3/19/20)*

**Does a diagnosis of COVID-19 qualify an employee for STD benefits?**
Such individuals will retain coverage under the Short Term Disability policy for the duration of quarantine, and The Standard will evaluate any claim for disability benefits individually.

**Prevention**
**What protective strategies can I use now?**
Preventative measures, such as staying home when sick, practicing good personal hygiene, practicing social distancing, staying updated on the latest recommendations, and remaining calm while diligent offer some of the best ways to protect yourself and others.

[www.pinellascounty.org/hr/coronavirus](http://www.pinellascounty.org/hr/coronavirus)
Updated 3/20/20