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.

We are here to help you navigate COVID-19 in the workplace.

UPDATED 1/29/21
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Supervisors

- Direct employees to resources at www.pinellascounty.org/hr/coronavirus. We recommend frequent references to this site for updated information.
- Communicate regularly with your employees. Be flexible, but consistent. Remain calm and measured.
- Discuss individual issues with your department leadership, Human Resources or the County Attorney’s Office, as appropriate.

What can I do as a supervisor for my employees during this time?

*You are integral to enforcing proper preventative measures* (see CDC recommendations for handwashing and employer guidance). Also:

- It’s vital that you provide necessary information, resources, and support to employees who are at work, at home working or sick, or away on leave.
- Model and enforce appropriate social distancing behaviors and face coverings.
  - The Appointing Authorities determined that face coverings were mandatory for employees and citizens in indoor public and common places inside County government buildings.
  - It’s important for you to follow social distancing requirements, wear a face covering, and to have ongoing conversations with your employees.
- To help reduce stress and stay connected, consider allowing employees time to get together briefly (10 or 15 minutes, virtually or with social distancing) to relax, connect, not talk about work, etc.

What if I have additional questions?

Contact Human Resources Employee Relations at employee.relations@pinellascounty.org or (727) 464-3506. All phone lines and emails are continually monitored and responded to as quickly as possible.

Scenarios/Exposure

What protective strategies can employees use now?

Preventative measures, such as:

- Staying home when sick
- Washing hands frequently
- Practicing social distancing
- Wearing a face covering
- Cleaning commonly touched surfaces with disinfectant
- Staying updated on the latest accurate information and recommendations
- Remaining calm

These are the best ways to protect yourself and others.
What happens if an employee is sick at work? Updated 1/5/21

- Send the employee home immediately. The employee should consult with their healthcare provider.
- Contact Facilities to request a deep cleaning of the employee’s work area.
- Inform others of the possible exposure including only necessary information and maintaining the affected employee’s confidentiality, including identity.
- Those employees with close contact in the 48 hours before the employee began experiencing symptoms until the employee left the workplace should be sent home to quarantine for 2 weeks and monitor their health.
- While 14 days of quarantine is still recommended, the Department of Health-Pinellas and CDC quarantine guidelines have recently been updated for asymptomatic close contacts of someone with known or suspected COVID-19. Different quarantine guidelines may be applied depending on the situation.
- Speak to your supervisor or director to determine the quarantine guidelines recommendation for your employee.

What if an employee hears about a coworker that may be sick with COVID-19?

If an employee has information about a possible infection, the employee should share the information privately with management only so that proper steps can be taken and to avoid causing anxiety among other staff.

What if an employee believes they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, but the employee is not experiencing related symptoms? Updated 1/5/21

For COVID-19, a close contact is defined as anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient was isolated.

If an employee has had a close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, they must quarantine for 14 days and follow guidelines. Quarantine guidelines updated in December 2020 provide options to decrease the quarantine time period in some situations as noted above. It is important to speak to your director/supervisor to determine which quarantine guideline is applicable for your department.

- 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 other 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,” are not required to be in quarantine and should be permitted to continue to work, following recommendations for social distancing as appropriate.
If an asymptomatic employee is notified by a local health department that they are a close contact of a confirmed case, they will be required to quarantine in their home, following the guidelines provided by the CDC.

What are the new options to reduce quarantine? NEW 1/5/21

Reducing the length of quarantine may make it easier for people to quarantine by reducing the time they cannot work. A shorter quarantine period also can lessen stress on the public health system, especially when new infections are rapidly rising.

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Options may include stopping quarantine:

- After day 10 without testing
- After day 7 after receiving a negative PCR test result (test must occur on day 6 or later)

After stopping quarantine, you should watch for symptoms until 14 days after exposure.

- If you have symptoms, immediately self-isolate and contact your local public health authority or healthcare provider.
- Wear a mask, stay at least 6 feet from others, wash your hands, avoid crowds, and take other steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

These are recommendations. Please follow your supervisor’s/director’s guidance.

Telework

Is telecommuting an option?

Telecommuting, video chat meetings, conference calling and the use of technological tools that enable remote work can be great ways to maintain operations while limiting exposure between employees. Such options may not be feasible for many positions within the County due to the nature of the job or type of work performed.

Whether to allow telecommuting is the decision of each Appointing Authority. As such, Appointing Authorities that want to allow, or require, telecommuting should be clear about expectations for those arrangements and consistently apply appropriate policies in effect. View the BTS Remote Work Guidance (login to SharePoint required). More resources are available on our website such as 10 Tips for Working Effectively at Home and Well-being Ideas for Remote Employees.

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1 PCR = polymerase chain reaction
Absence and Leave

How should supervisors respond to an employee’s request for time off due to COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms or illness?

Employee requests for time off due to COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms or illness should be granted and tracked along with other requests and absences. Any employee displaying flu and flu-like symptoms should not come to work. Per our current policy, this is considered scheduled leave since flu-related absences are currently treated as scheduled leave.

Should supervisors require doctor’s notes for absences related to COVID-19?

No. In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), doctor’s notes shall not be required from employees for flu and flu-like illnesses (including COVID-19). The same applies 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. Employees may be required to provide a medical note to return to work after taking time off or staying home due to COVID-19 symptoms and exposure. Check with your Appointing Authority about these requirements before allowing employees to return to the office.

What are the options regarding paid leave?

- **Accrued Annual Leave** - Continue to use the following to mark COVID-related absences:
  - AL Covid19 (when using Annual Leave for COVID-related absence)
  - LWOP Covid19 (when using Leave Without Pay for COVID-related absence)
- **A Friend in Need (AFIN)** – See Policy #12. This 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. NOTE: A Friend in Need Program is available for an employee who is sick or needs to care for a sick family member but NOT to an employee who needs to take care of well children due to school being closed.
- **Administrative leave with pay** – See Personnel Rule 4 which provides Appointing Authorities the ability to grant administrative leave with pay if such leave is in the best interests of the organization.
- **Leave without pay** - See Personnel Rule 4 which provides the option of leave without pay after all forms of accumulated or gained leave have been exhausted (with noted exceptions).

Return to Work Documentation

What documentation does Pinellas County require for an employee to return to work after a positive test result?

A proof of negative test or doctor’s note to return to work may be required. Before allowing employees to return to the office, check with your Appointing Authority’s requirements as they may vary.
Supervisors must be consistent in how requirements are applied across the board.

**An employee got a negative test result and was required to quarantine for 2 more days. Is this an acceptable return to work documentation?**

If a doctor has indicated on the note that the employee has tested negative and has two remaining days left to quarantine, then the employee can return, following medical advice, on the third day with that note indicating the timeframe.

### Traveling

**What if my employee travels? Should they self-quarantine?**

Employees should speak with their supervisors about accommodations prior to and after their travel plans. It is important to check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Florida Department of Health’s travel guidance.

Follow the [CDC travel recommendations](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/) and [directions from the Florida Department of Health](https://florida.cdc.gov/) on what to do if an employee has recently traveled and wants to return to work. Please check this information before making a decision as recommendations may change quickly. Consult with Employee Relations at employee.relations@pinellascounty.org or (727) 464-3506 with any questions or concerns.

### Temporary Employees

**What about temporary employees from Personnel Solutions Plus (PSP)?**

Temporary contract workers were notified via PSP about our practices of staying home if sick, using good hygiene and that they will be sent home if sick. You, as a supervisor, should also emphasize these practices to all employees including temporary contract workers. Some PSP employees continue to work – either remotely or in the office. Please contact jobs@pinellascounty.org if you have questions.