



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Linn, Iowa

Temporary Employment Policies in Response to the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)			Directive Number:
Approval Date: 03/20/20	Effective Date: 03/20/20	Revision No:	Policy Section & Number: PM-024
Reference: BOS Minutes 3-20-20		Distribution: Elected Officials, Department Heads, County Employee Handbook, Intranet, County Website	

I. General Statement of Policy

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), a respiratory virus designated as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization, has generated a need to address multiple Linn County employment-related policies on a temporary basis to ensure the health and safety of Linn County employees while providing for continuity of services to Linn County residents. The purpose of this policy is to implement various employment-related practices, on a temporary basis, that are consistent with federal OSHA and CDC recommendations for employers, while also ensuring the continuity of Linn County government services. To the extent any permanent policy of the County contradicts this policy while in effect, the terms of this policy shall prevail.

II. Employee Infection Control Practices

Employees are expected to adhere to the infection control practices outlined in this policy, and in other communications previously sent to employees by the Linn County Public Health Department and the Linn County Board of Supervisors as well as new guidance which may be sent in the future. Employees are further required to comply with any department specific rules regarding notification of absences and those implemented for infection control purposes. Those practices specifically include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you don't have a tissue handy, cough or sneeze into your upper arm/elbow
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Maintain at least a 5-6 ft. distance from your co-workers
- Stay home when you are sick

III. Linn County Infection Control Practices

In addition to the specific policy initiatives reflected below, Linn County will engage in the following employment-related control and prevention practices:

- Limit and/or eliminate non-essential staff meetings, conferences, trainings or other gatherings
- Limit and/or eliminate any non-essential work-related travel
- Make available wipes and other disposable cleaning products for routine environmental cleaning of work areas

Linn County will take other employment-related action(s) as recommended by federal (e.g., the CDC or OSHA) or state authorities (e.g., the Iowa Department of Public Health or Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department).

IV. Remote Work for Designated Linn County Staff

Linn County department heads and elected officials, in consultation with the Human Resources Director, will determine what positions have duties that are able to be performed remotely in a productive manner. When and if it becomes necessary, the Continuity of Operations Officer (Risk Manager), in consultation with the Board Support Team, will determine which positions are considered essential services staff as those positions are required to be physically present at a work site in order to maintain basic minimum services necessary for continuity of ongoing operations. Depending on the situation, some essential services staff may be required, or asked, to work remotely. Non-essential staff may need to be sent home but will not necessarily have the ability to work from home.

Consistent with OSHA recommendations¹ that employers implement policies, such as telecommuting, designed to limit contact between individuals to mitigate spread, departments and offices must permit staff to work remotely to the extent the position duties are able to be performed remotely. Determination as to whether a position is (1) non-essential, and (2) capable of being performed remotely is solely at the discretion of the department/office.

All remote workers shall be required to agree to the terms of the Telework Agreement attached to this policy.

V. Identification and Isolation of Employees with COVID-19 Symptoms

Prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is critical in protecting the health and safety of Linn County employees, customers, visitors and others at Linn County worksites. Guidance from the CDC on COVID-19 symptoms are as follows:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

¹ See <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf> at page 9.

Employees exhibiting symptoms, including but not necessarily limited to those identified above, associated with COVID-19 must be immediately isolated from others at the worksite. Isolation, in most cases, will mean directing the employee's removal from the worksite, and encouraging the employee to self-quarantine at their home and seek appropriate medical testing and treatment. If the severity of an employee's symptoms warrant, emergency medical personnel may need to be contacted.

Symptomatic employees should remain at home until they are free of fever (temperature of 100.4 degree Fahrenheit or greater using an oral thermometer) or other symptoms for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g., cough suppressants).²

Employees directed to isolate shall do so in accordance with the leave provisions provided in Section VI, below.

VI. Paid Leave for COVID-19 Isolation, Testing, Treatment and/or Recovery and Travel

Pursuant to multiple [MOUs](#) negotiated with the County's unions, employees will not be required to use their accrued sick leave, or other accrued paid leave, but will remain on paid status, for up to fourteen (14) calendar days (or until released to return to work) if the following criteria is met:

- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 and must therefore stay home per their doctor's and/or Iowa Department of Public Health's orders.
- If an employee is quarantined per their doctor's, Iowa Department of Public Health and/or the Center for Disease Control orders due to suspected exposure with COVID-19
- If an employee has been exposed to someone who has the virus and needs to be tested.
- If an employee is needed to care for a family member who has the virus or has been in contact with someone who has the virus.
- If an employee has traveled to an area that is on a restricted travel list (domestic or international) in effect on the planned date of return.

Note: An employee whose function is deemed part of an essential County service should follow the IDPH's Isolation Guidance for Essential Services Personnel. The established timelines may be different than is outlined above.

VII. Sick Leave Usage for COVID-19 Related Circumstances

Employees will be required to use their accrued sick leave for other circumstances connected to the virus outbreak such as:

- An employee showing potential virus symptoms or and who has consulted with a health care provider and submits proof of such consultation.

² See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>.

- An employee who chooses to self-isolate due to an underlying health condition or age, or that of a spouse or dependent, and submits a recommendation for the self-isolation from a health care provider.
- An employee who needs to stay home to care for a family member due to the closing of a school or child/adult daycare. An employee choosing this option may be subject to callback in order to maintain minimum staffing levels at 24/7 operations and county-designated essential services.

Per the union MOUs, an employee using his/her sick leave or short term leave will be allowed to borrow against future sick leave or short term leave accruals for up to 80 hours (2 weeks) for a full-time employee (pro-rated for part-time employees) once their current sick leave balance is exhausted. In addition, if the absence is due to caring for a family member, an employee may exceed the contractual limitation on use of family sick leave for the period of the MOUs (currently May 31, 2020). The definition of family will follow contractual provisions. Before an employee will be allowed to return to work, they need to be symptom-free for a period of 24 hours and provide a release from their healthcare provider to return to work.

All requests for “extra” or sick leave use must come through the Human Resources Department. For leave under Sections VI and VII, an employee must contact an HR staff member. HR staff will verify the request either through the employee providing documentation of medical condition, quarantine orders or through consultation with the Public Health Department, communicate with the department supervisor and coordinate the tracking process for any negative sick leave balance usages and potential FEMA reimbursement.

Related MOUs regarding use of sick leave have been developed with each of the County’s unions and can be viewed at [MOUs](#). Provisions for leave types and usages referred to in Sections VI and VII are subject to change without notice should federal, state law or local policy mandate a different application of paid leave.

Management and confidential employees are eligible for the categories noted above in Sections VI and VII. Management and confidential employees may immediately access their long term leave for COVID-19 related reasons without first using 24 hours of short term leave.

Linn County trusts that its employees will not abuse benefits provided in this policy, especially during a time in which all available asymptomatic essential employees will be needed to help cover absences for others who may be ill and unable to report to work. Any employee found to violate this trust by abusing this benefit shall be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

VIII. Leave for Employees in Identified High-Risk Categories

Employees in essential positions requiring their presence at the worksite who fall into one of the high-risk categories as determined by the CDC³ may request the department provide an alternate/modified work assignment or leave to accommodate their underlying risk factor(s). Departments and offices will accommodate the leave request to the greatest extent feasible, consistent with the operational continuity of the department/office. If leave is granted by the department/office, the employee may utilize any accrued leave. If an employee does not have available accrued leave, the employee may be placed in an authorized leave without pay status.

Employees with disabilities seeking employment-related accommodation may do so in accordance with Linn County's ADA reasonable accommodation procedures.

IX. Contingent Staffing Plans

Departments and offices are encouraged to consult with Linn County Human Resources to develop contingent staffing plans that will ensure sufficient staffing levels for the continuity of operations. Contingent staffing plans will be department/office-specific, and designed to address the specific operational continuity needs of that department/office.

X. Resources

Employees are encouraged to remain informed by consulting federal, state and local authorities that are providing guidance regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. A list of resources is provided below:

- OSHA guidance for employers:
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
- CDC COVID-19 guidance:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Iowa Department of Public Health:
<https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus>
- Linn County Health Department:
<https://www.linncounty.org/1372/COVID-19>

Contact: Human Resources (319) 892-5120

Created: March 20, 2020

³ The CDC has determined the following categories of individuals are at a higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19: older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes or lung disease. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>.