

Sutter County Return to Work Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Do all employees have to report back to the workplace?
 - a. Each department should have a plan for bringing employees back to work, either at the workplace or at home through telework. Where there is not enough work for all employees due to public visits being eliminated, court operations reduced, or some other circumstance that affects workload, the department can work directly with the CAO's office to determine whether alternate work assignments are available for staff. If no other options are available, the CAO will consider allowing additional paid administrative leave on a case by case basis. Anyone receiving paid administrative leave should be ready to report to work upon request. If they cannot return due to child care issues related to COVID-19 impacted school or childcare closure, they should use available leave balances (which may include Families First Coronavirus Recovery Act [FFCRA] leaves – detailed below) to remain off work.

2. How can we accommodate employees who fall into one of the “vulnerable groups” such as over age 65 and/or with a chronic underlying medical condition?
 - a. Employees with known pre-existing conditions, including underlying health conditions or compromised immune systems, may request a reasonable accommodation that will allow them to telecommute as opposed to returning to work. The County is required to engage in the interactive process with employees who request reasonable accommodations and we must accommodate the request if doing so would not create and undue hardship for the department's operations. Please contact Human Resources for assistance with the ADA process.

3. When will paid administrative leave stop?
 - a. Unless the exception in #1 applies, paid administrative leave for employees due to office closure will cease when their department returns employees to full-time status. This does not mean that the department will be open for public facing functions.

4. Are the employees who are returning to work still eligible to earn up to 80 hours of Emergency Vacation Leave as outlined in Section 35.1.7 of the *Rules Governing Employee Compensation, Benefits and Working Conditions*?
 - a. This section allows departments to provide leave when some employees are working even though the office is closed due to an emergency or the work they normally perform has been halted. When the office resumes operations, the employees working are no longer eligible to accrue Emergency Vacation Leave. The County's plan is to return employees to full-time status effective April 27th or May 4th; therefore, the accrual of Emergency Vacation Leave will cease effective April 24, 2020 the last day of the current pay period.

5. How will employees know when and where to report for work?
 - a. Employees will be notified by their department head or their designee of the date of reopening and the location and time that they should report.

6. Can employees still work from home?
 - a. Department heads are encouraged to allow the continuation of telework where productivity and efficiency of department operations can be maintained. Employees telecommuting should continue to complete the “Offsite Work Daily Report.”

7. Can my department expand work from home?
 - a. Where possible and practical, department heads are encouraged to expand telework. Employees should complete the “Offsite Work Program Work Agreement and Work Plan.” The agreement should be signed by the supervisor and the department head prior to the telework beginning.

8. Are additional laptop computers available to expand telework?
 - a. A limited number of laptop computers are available from Information Technology. Department heads can email Ken Sra to determine whether any are available.

9. What if I have an employee doing telework from home, and it’s not working out?
 - a. Supervisors should be monitoring telework and productivity. By doing so, they may be able to address and resolve any issues with working remotely. If they cannot, departments should work with Human Resources to determine the best course of action.

10. Should all employees reporting to a county worksite do a health screening every day?
 - a. All employees reporting to an onsite location must go through a health screening before proceeding to their work area each day. Health screenings are performed on work time. Health screenings are performed by the employee on themselves using the instructions provided at a health screening station set up at each workplace. Larger departments may want to have multiple screening areas to accommodate more than one entry area. If there is a line at the screening station, employees should maintain a minimum of six feet from the next person and wear their face covering.

11. What things do I need at a health screening station?
 - a. All departments should set up a screening station that includes hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, an infrared thermometer, instructions on completing a health screening and a log sheet. Each employee should write their name on the log and check that they have completed the screening. (No details about the health screening should be logged, as that would be considered protected health information.) Some departments, especially larger ones, should consider assigning a wristband each day with a color for the specific day for each employee to wear after they have completed their health screening. Supplies, including wristbands, can be obtained from General Services. Employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 should follow the protocols from Dr. Luu.

12. How can I get supplies to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to my office/worksites?
 - a. Departments should email a purchase requisition for ongoing COVID-19 related supplies (including hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes or spray, wristbands, etc.) to purchasing@co.sutter.ca.us. Please include "COVID-19" in the email subject line and in the special instructions section on the purchase requisition form. Departments that make purchases in this manner do not need to use a form 213 RR in addition to the requisition. However, if a department wishes to purchase items directly, they should complete a form 213 RR and submit it to Kathy Ferguson prior to the purchase.

13. Can I have more than 10 people at work?
 - a. It depends on the worksite. If it's a large open area and 6 feet of distance can be continuously maintained, then more than 10 people may be in the area. The rule of thumb is half the normal capacity should allow for sufficient social distancing. For example, if a room normally accommodates 30 people, then you should limit the number present to 15. Department heads should exercise their judgment on how many people should be in a location based upon the ability to maintain sufficient distance. If it's a work area with private offices and cubicles that accommodate more than 10 people, more than 10 can be present. In some cases, departments should consider alternating cubicles to allow sufficient distancing. Departments should consider closing common areas where personnel are likely to congregate and interact. Strict social distancing protocols must be maintained.

14. Should my employees be wearing face coverings in the workplace?
 - a. Any time an employee is in an area where they may come into contact with other employees, they should wear a face covering. When in a private office, cubicle, or workstation where 6 feet of distance can continuously be maintained, they do not have to wear a covering. If a hallway is located close to work stations or cubicles, ensure that employees in the hallway are wearing face coverings. If your department needs face coverings, they can get them from General Services.

15. Should my employees be wearing gloves?
 - a. Gloves should only be used for picking up deliveries, handling money, handling mail and other items that have come to the employee. Gloves should be disposed of after each use. Handwashing and hand sanitizing remain the preferred method against spreading the virus. If your department needs gloves, you can order them directly or contact Purchasing (see #12).

16. If my employee must visit another department, can they do that?
 - a. If an employee must visit another department (for example, to make a deposit), they may do so. However, they should wear a face covering and only go to the department after they have first come to their own worksite for their health screening and should maintain social distance and handwashing/sanitizing procedures. They may be asked by the department they're visiting to demonstrate that they have had a health screening.

17. How can I make sure that employees maintain social distancing in the workplace?
- a. Social distancing is a key to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Department heads can stagger shifts to reduce the number of employees in the workplace. Employees should not congregate in common areas such as a workroom or kitchen. In some cases, the department head may have to close off a common area to ensure that employees aren't congregating. Departments can, where possible, make hallways or walkways one way so that employees don't come face to face.
18. What if people must use a common copier, printer, or other equipment or be in a common work area such as a file room?
- a. Use should be staggered to ensure that employees aren't lining up at a machine. Commonly used items such as copiers, printers and door handles should be wiped down with disinfecting wipes at the end of each day and, depending on use in the office, throughout the day. Departments may want to put a large bottle of hand sanitizer in common areas as well. If employees are in a common area together, they should be using a face covering and maintaining 6 feet of distance from others.
19. Can employees share a vehicle?
- a. Unless absolutely necessary, two or more employees should not ride in a single vehicle at the same time. If it is necessary, both should wear face coverings and maintain as much distance as is safe and practical. Items that are touched, such as steering wheels and door handles should be wiped down with disinfecting wipes after each use.
20. If an employee comes to work: a) showing symptoms of COVID-19, b) after travel to known areas with community transmission, and/or c) after known or suspected contact with an affected individual, can I ask the employee to leave work and go home?
- a. Yes. Under the California Occupational Safety and Health Act (Cal-OSHA), the County is required to maintain safe and healthy working conditions for employees. If an employee is sent home from work and has leave balances, you may require the employee to use emergency paid sick leave, if applicable (see #21, #22 and #23 below), or his or her own leave balances. After an employee has exhausted his or her available leave balances, the County must provide paid administrative leave until the employee is able to return to work. **In any instance where an employee is sent home for the above reasons, please contact Human Resources as there is an additional notification that is required to be provided to the employee.**
21. What is the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and what does it require?
- a. The FFCRA requires public agencies to provide 1) 80 hours of emergency paid sick leave (reduced for part-time employees) for immediate use for six COVID-19 related reasons; and 2) up to 12 weeks of paid FMLA leave for employees who need to be off work due to school closures or where childcare is not available.

22. Are all County employees eligible for emergency paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave under the President's FFCRA?
- a. No. The Act provides that certain employees may be excluded from the new paid sick leave and/or expanded family and medical leave. These employees include "health care providers" and "emergency responders." These categories of employees are defined very broadly by the Act and include 1) employees who interact with and aid individuals with physical or mental health issues, 2) employees who ensure the welfare and safety of our communities and of our nation, 3) employees who have specialized training relevant to emergency response; and 4) employees who provide essential services relevant to the American people's health and wellbeing. The regulations further identify individuals who work for such facilities employing health care providers and emergency responders and whose work is necessary to maintain the operation of the facility as exempt.
23. When can an employee use Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL)?
- a. An employee is eligible for EPSL when he or she is unable to work, including working from home, because:
 - 1) The employee is subject to a quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19 (this does not include "shelter in place" orders);
 - 2) The employee has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19;
 - 3) The employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
 - 4) The employee is caring for an individual subject to a quarantine or isolation order, or who has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine;
 - 5) The employee is caring for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed (or childcare provider is unavailable) due to COVID-19 reasons; or
 - 6) The employee is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition as specified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (none have been identified to date).
24. Does the FFCRA provide an eligible employee with 80 hours of EPSL at their regular rate of pay?
- a. It depends on the amount of the employee's regular rate of pay. For EPSL reasons 1-3 above, the employee receives their regular rate of pay; however, the pay cannot exceed \$511 per day and \$5,110 in total. For EPSL reasons 4-6 above, an employee receives 2/3 of their regular rate of pay; however, the pay cannot exceed \$200 per day and \$2,000 in total. Employees may use their other available paid leaves with EPSL so they receive their full pay.

25. How does an employee request EPSL?
- a. The County has developed an [Emergency Paid Sick Leave or Emergency FMLA Request](#) form for employees' use when requesting to be off work. An employee needing leave for a qualifying reason should complete the EPSL Request Form and submit it to his or her supervisor. The Form should also be simultaneously emailed directly to payroll@co.sutter.ca.us and Marlis Alexander in Human Resources at malexander@co.sutter.ca.us.
26. What are the benefits of the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act?
- a. If an employee is unable to work or work from home due to a need for leave to care for a son or daughter under 18 years of age if the school or place of care has been closed or the childcare provider is unavailable, an employee is eligible for 12 weeks of paid emergency family and medical leave. The first 10 days of an employee's absence is unpaid; however eligible employees may substitute EPSL for the first 10 days. After the first 10 days, an employee is paid 2/3 of his or her regular rate of pay up to a maximum of \$200 per day and \$10,000 in total for the number of hours the employee would have been regularly scheduled to work. An employee may choose to use any available leave balances to make up a full pay check.
27. Can I require an eligible employee to use his or her own leave balances before providing the Emergency Paid Sick Leave?
- a. No. An eligible employee must use Emergency Paid Sick Leave before being required to use his or her own leave balances.
28. Are all employees still eligible to borrow up to 80 hours of sick leave if they run out of leave balances?
- a. Yes. The Board's action on March 24th continues to apply to all employees.
29. Is there anything else I need to know?
- a. Common sense prevails. If you're unsure of a situation, Human Resources and the CAO's office can assist. We may need to get clarification from Dr. Luu on some issues. Please reach out. If you're asking, someone else probably has the same question.