



**Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Commissioner
Policy and Procedure Statement**

Policy # DHHS-31-07

Issue Date: 4/10/07
Revised Date:

I. SUBJECT

Human Resources Guidelines During Public Health Emergencies Involving Infectious Diseases

II. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to provide generalized guidelines on leave utilization, staffing and personal hygiene to staff and managers during public health emergencies such as a pandemic influenza.

Office Director/Facility Director will determine the staffing levels necessary for executing critical operations plans in cases of reduced staffing in response to public health emergencies. During periods of a public health emergency it is important that communication flow throughout DHHS. Managers and supervisors will be responsible for communicating operational requirements throughout their Units.

III. RATIONALE

In the event of a public health emergency, it will be necessary to take steps to ensure critical functions continue should staffing shortages occur.

IV. PROCEDURE STATEMENT

A. Leave Usage:

During public health emergencies, it will be necessary for some staff to absent themselves from work. The following guidelines apply:

1. Sick leave can be used in accordance with collective bargaining agreements which state sick leave can be used for illness and/or medical care of the employee or a member of the employee's immediate family that requires the attention or presence of the employee.
2. During public health emergencies, vacation leave will be granted if operational needs of the agency and critical job function can be met based on existing staff.
3. Leaves of absences under the Family Medical Leave Act shall be granted provided the illness qualifies as a serious health condition per the State of Maine policy.
4. All other medical leaves of absences will be granted based upon current guidelines and supporting medical documentation.
5. Staff who utilize paid leave, or leave without pay, for reasons substantially related to pandemic influenza must provide appropriate notice of absences to your supervisor.
6. Should office closures be necessary administrative leave may be granted in accordance with governing policies and procedures or staff may be transferred to other DHHS locations.

B. Staff Redeployment:

It may be necessary to re-deploy and train staff in areas of the Department that where critical public services must be maintained.

1. When staffing absences increase due to illness, it is particularly important for staff to report to work as scheduled. However, staff who present symptoms of contagious illness while at work will be sent home utilizing accrued leave.
2. Skill sets of staff will be identified to determine qualifications and ability to perform the functions of the job. Staff will receive necessary orientation/training from appropriate personnel prior to reassignment. (Ref. DHHS Critical Operations Plans)
3. Staff assignments may extend beyond normal workdays/shifts. Overtime compensation will be paid in accordance with existing bargaining unit agreements.
 - a. Whenever possible volunteers will be solicited to perform critical services.
 - b. In the event a staff member has received training and appropriate personal protective equipment, yet refuses to be re-assigned, managers will consult with the Human Resource Division.
 - c. Telework (working from home or another location) will be evaluated and approved as appropriate by Office Directors, as technology is available for use.

C. Universal Precautions:

The best known protection against illnesses and the common cold in the work environment is the exercise of universal precautions. All staff are encouraged to practice good hygiene while carrying out work duties, and take necessary precautions which include:

1. Frequent hand washing, use of waterless hand sanitizer, coughing into sleeves, and and vaccinations.
2. Using personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and surgical or other masks, and/or protective eyewear when working with those who may have symptoms.
3. Social distancing is recommended to ensure the spread of contagious illness is prevented. Keeping a distance of 3 feet from people is recommended.
4. Protective equipment will be provided such as gloves, protective eyewear, and masks as necessary based upon public health recommendations.

D. Technology:

1. Existing Technologies may be expanded to minimize person-to-person contact. When possible and appropriate, e-mail, phone, video conferencing. Instant messaging, teleconferencing will be utilized to carry work responsibilities.
2. Managers and supervisor will advise staff of expectations with regard to person-to-person contact.

V. DISTRIBUTION

All employees, via e-mail and hard-copy postings on designated bulletin boards; posting on intranet DHHS website under Employee Policies.

April 10, 2007
Effective Date

Brenda M. Harvey
Commissioner