



HERNANDO COUNTY
Board of County Commissioners

Policy Title: HEALTH AND SAFETY CONTINUITY INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL GUIDANCE	Effective Date:	August 24, 2021
	Revision Date(s):	January 11, 2022
	Latest Review:	August 24, 2021 January 11, 2022

Policy Statement

Hernando County strives to provide a safe and healthy workplace for employees. This policy outlines the measures the organization takes in response to an infectious disease, pandemic, or other similar illness as defined by the Centers for Disease Control or local Health Department to protect the health and safety of employees from potential exposure or transmission of infectious diseases or widespread viral pandemic. Hernando County will take proactive steps to protect the workplace in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. It is the goal of Hernando County during any such time period to strive to operate effectively and ensure that all essential services are continuously provided and that employees are safe within the workplace.

Hernando County is committed to providing information about the nature and spread of infectious diseases, including symptoms and signs to watch for, as well as required steps to be taken in the event of an illness or outbreak.

To minimize the effect of any disease outbreak, disease control measures may be ordered to include a broad array of actions isolation and quarantine orders and social distancing measures are likely to be used.

PROCEDURES

Preventing the Spread of Infections in the Workplace

Hernando County will make efforts to ensure a clean workplace, including the regular cleaning of objects and areas that are frequently used, such as bathrooms, breakrooms, conference rooms, and door handles.

All employees should cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of infectious diseases in the workplace. The best strategy remains frequent hand washing with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds; covering your mouth whenever you sneeze or cough; avoid touching eyes and nose; discarding used tissues in wastebaskets; and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also available throughout the workplace and in common areas.

Unless otherwise notified, normal attendance, paid time off, Family Medical Leave Act, and administrative leave policies will remain in place. Individuals who believe they may face particular challenges reporting to work during an infectious disease outbreak should take steps to develop any necessary contingency plans. For example, employees should arrange for alternative sources of child-care if schools close and/or speak with supervisors about the potential to work from home temporarily or on an alternative work schedule. Other leave time may be available as defined by federal or state Law.

Telecommuting or Remote Work

Telework or remote work requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis and operational needs at the discretion of the department as defined by current policies and procedures. While not all positions will be eligible, all requests for temporary telecommuting should be submitted to your Department Director for consideration.

Staying Home During Illness

Many times, with the best of intentions, employees report to work even though they feel ill. We provide paid time off (PTO) and other benefits to accommodate employees who are unable to work due to illness. Employees who are sick must use accrued leave time according to current policy. Those employees who have not accrued enough leave will be provided assistance on a case-by-case basis as defined below in the voluntary PTO loan stipulations. Employees or family members who contract an infectious disease or are quarantined must notify their immediate supervisors immediately. In most situations, return to work will not be allowed until cleared by a medical professional.

During an infectious disease outbreak, it is critical that employees do not report to work while they are ill and/or experiencing the following symptoms: difficulty breathing, fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work, until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C], signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees who report to work ill will be sent home in accordance with these health guidelines.

Additional Signs and Symptoms of Widespread Contagious Infectious Disease of Virus

In the event that a widespread contagious disease or virus outbreak is encountered within the workplace, employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of the disease or virus will be determined based on the most recent information available from the local Health Department or the Centers for Disease Control.

An employee exhibiting influenza-related symptoms (e.g., fever, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches) or other symptoms, described by a

public health organization as indicative of other contagion, such as Coronavirus, SARS, swine flu, H1N1, etc.; and/or is diagnosed with an infectious/contagious condition (e.g., influenza, strep throat, tuberculosis, bacterial meningitis, mononucleosis, mumps, measles, rubella, chicken pox, etc.); or an employee and/or family member/household member has recently traveled to a geographic area or has been subjected to a confined area, such as cruise ship or airplane, actively identified by a recognized health organization to present a high degree of contagion health risk or an area for which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a Level 2 or 3 travel advisory.

If an employee disputes whether or not they are experiencing the symptoms of a widespread contagious disease or virus, a doctor's note may be required by the Department Director or Manager before an employee is allowed to resume working.

Requests for Medical Information and/or Documentation

If you are out sick or show symptoms of being ill, it may become necessary to request information from you and/or your health care provider. In general, we would request medical information to confirm your need to be absent, to show whether and how an absence relates to the infection, and to know that it is appropriate for you to return to work. As always, we expect and appreciate your cooperation if and when medical information is sought.

Confidentiality of Medical Information

Our policy is to treat any medical information as a confidential medical record. In furtherance of this policy, any disclosure of medical information is in limited circumstances with supervisors, managers, medical or safety personnel, and government officials as required by law.

Social Distancing Guidelines for Workplace Infectious Disease Outbreaks

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, social distancing guidelines may be implemented to minimize the spread of the disease among the staff.

During the workday, employees are requested to:

1. Avoid meeting people face-to-face. Employees are encouraged to use the telephone, online conferencing, e-mail or instant messaging to conduct business as much as possible, even when participants are in the same building.
2. If a face-to-face meeting is unavoidable, minimize the meeting time, choose a large meeting room and sit at least one yard from each other if possible; avoid person-to-person contact.
3. Avoid any unnecessary travel and cancel or postpone nonessential meetings, gatherings, workshops and training sessions.
4. Encourage members and others to request information and orders via phone and e-mail in order to minimize person-to-person contact. Have the orders, materials and information ready for fast pick-up or delivery.

Temporary Voluntary Paid Time Off Leave Loan

A limited voluntary PTO Leave Loan and Payback Program for BOCC departments is available for employees that have exhausted PTO, or are on probationary status, leave due to quarantine or recovery due to infectious disease or outbreak, or to care for immediate family members in quarantine or recovery. Up to eighty (80) hours of paid time off for specific use in the proposed voluntary process to provide for continuation of regular wages and benefits. For employees that separate from employment for any reason prior to full payback, the remaining amount owed will be deducted from the employee's final payout.

The voluntary paid time off process will also be available for those employees needing to utilize leave for childcare as a result of the infectious disease related school suspensions or to care for sick family members. The County will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate within PTO and other leave policies and procedures considering individual department business or operational needs.

This voluntary program is initiated by the employee via the repayment agreement. The intent is to allow employees to have an option for choosing to lower their accrual rates by 50% in order to pay back the loaned PTO leave over time, while still earning a smaller amount to rebuild their balances.

If a department or division is forced to close operations due to a widespread contagious disease or viral outbreak, those employees may be redeployed to another location if telework is not available. Decisions to grant administrative leave will be handled on a case-by-case basis as approved by the County Administrator, or designee in accordance with current policies and procedures.

Administrative Leave Guidelines for Board of County Commissioner (BOCC) Employees and Hernando County Fire and Emergency Services (HCFES)

Effective through, December 31, 2022, first responders employed by HCFES will receive up to 96.0 hours of Administrative Leave for purposes of leave time if they receive a positive COVID-19 test. Employees defined as first responders shall supply verification of a positive PCR COVID-19 test from a qualified medical professional and is required by HCFES for payroll purposes.

Effective through December 31, 2022, regular, active status BOCC employees will receive up to 80.0 hours of Administrative Leave if receive a positive COVID-19 test with verification from a qualified medical or other professional for purposes of processing payroll.