March 16, 2020

Subject: Human Resources Alert COVID-19 Update for County Employees

Dear County Employees:

As you know, Dallas County has experienced several confirmed cases of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). Those residents and visitors who tested positive for COVID-19 are being treated at local hospitals. As this public health emergency progresses, we expect further disruptions and impacts on county operations and its county employees.

The Dallas County Health and Human Services Department (DCHHS) has issued new guidelines to improve the safety of individuals who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 infection. These guidelines include instructions on minimizing exposure for vulnerable populations.

Vulnerable individuals are those who:

• are 60 years old and older; or

• have health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease and weakened immune systems.

The guidelines advise vulnerable individuals to limit outings, avoid large gatherings, telecommute if possible, stay home if sick, and avoid people who are sick.

If you have a health condition and are unsure whether it places you in the vulnerable population, ask your personal health care provider. If your health care provider advises you to stay away from work and you cannot work remotely, you may use any accrued leave. If you are a vulnerable individual and you and your supervisor believe you have a job that can do from home, please discuss this option with your supervisor. You will not be obligated to disclose your medical condition or other personal information, only that you believe you are in a vulnerable group, and that you are requesting permission to work remotely.

The county will do all it can to minimize health risk for its employees, consistent with DCHHS recommendations and occupational health standards. Where a department determines it is possible, employees who can perform their work remotely are encouraged to telecommute. Some employees, including those in the vulnerable population, may not be allowed to telecommute because their job is deemed critical to county services or operations. For example, health care workers, most employees in our penal institutions or those serving as front line public service providers. The County is taking measures in the workplace to mitigate risks.

The county is encouraging departments to temporarily expand the use of telecommuting, and to consider offering flexible start and end times for shifts during this period. As you know, not all county employees have jobs that are appropriate for telecommuting. Review the county telecommuting policy and process found in Sec 82-33 of the Dallas County code. Short-term telecommuting agreements may be approved at the department level.

Please remember to keep yourself safe:

• Wash hands with soap and water for at least 30 seconds.
• Cover your cough or sneeze (use your elbow or shoulder, not your hands).

• Notify your supervisor and stay home if you are sick.

• Get your flu shot to protect against flu or symptoms similar to COVID-19.

During the course of this public health emergency, the county will not require employees who have been sick with flu or flu-like symptoms to provide a doctor’s note when they return to work, even if the employees are on sick leave restriction or returning after an absence of more than five days.

We thank each of you for your continued dedication to serving Dallas County and our residents.


If you are unable to find information specifically related to your situation on the DCD or DCHHS website, please call the DCHHS public health information line at 972-692-2780.

Sincerely,

Darryl Martin, County Administrator

Bob Wilson, Human Resources Director