What the Stay-at-Home order means for us and updated Paid COVID-19 Leave Policy

Last weekend, Minnesota took additional measures against the COVID-19 pandemic by staying at home and limiting movement for only priority services that includes the critical work of our Department of Corrections team. Like our state agency peers, our continuity plan will keep guiding us through this unique and challenging time with ongoing assessment and prioritization of key agency operations. This helps us quickly identify critical work, capabilities, and opportunities to redistribute our workforce to support critical areas. Below are some updates on how the Stay-at-Home order is impacting us and the current Paid COVID-19 Leave policy.

Stay-at-Home Order

Over the last few weeks, we made changes to maximize your safety and minimize disruptions to our services. This includes safety measures in our workplace, teleworking for some, and offering Paid COVID-19 Leave. Below are key considerations in how the Stay-at-Home order can affect you:

- **Broad implementation of telework.** If you can telework, you must do so unless you are providing a critical service that requires you to continuing work on-site.

- **Certain priority roles must continue to report to work.** Certain priority and other critical sector roles must continue to report to the workplace. We have enhanced cleaning and safety measures and put in place other measures following the guidance of the Department of Health.

- **Reassigning or redeploying employees to support critical services.** If you are unable to telework, or your manager or supervisor has not required you to continue to report to the workplace, you may be temporarily reassigned or redeployed to a different role. These redeployments help support the greatest areas of need with the highest priorities. Our Incident Management Team (IMT) is working with Incident Commanders and facility leadership to identify current and potential needs. More information will be shared in the coming days.

- **Paid COVID-19 Leave.** May be available for employees not assigned to critical sector work, if you are unable to telework and are not reassigned or redeployed to a different role. Please note that sick and vacation time do not accrue while you are on Paid COVID-19 Leave.

Updated Paid COVID-19 Leave Policy

As our state responds to COVID-19, Governor Walz signed Executive Order 20-07 on March 17 to support state agency employees during this unprecedented time. This order provides one of the best paid leaves in the country for employees who cannot work due to certain COVID-19-related circumstances.
Last week, the President signed into law a federal government emergency coronavirus relief package. MMB was required to revise state policy to comply with the federal law. The revised policy is posted on MMB’s website and is effective April 1. The revised Paid COVID-19 Leave policy includes the addition of:

- Paid school care leave for kids under 18, rather than only 12 and under:
  - For kids older than 12, this is another use of Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave, is limited to a total of up to 12 weeks of FMLA at 2/3 pay, and runs concurrently with employees’ existing FMLA leave balance. The remaining 1/3 can be supplemented with accrued vacation or comp time. The total amount of FMLA leave available to any employee eligible for both FMLA and this leave will not exceed 12 workweeks in the fiscal year. Employees who have already exhausted their FMLA balance for the fiscal year are limited to up to 80 hours of this leave (pro-rated for part-time employees) at 2/3 pay. The remaining 1/3 can be supplemented with accrued vacation or comp time.
  - At this time, we will not impose these caps and limitations on school leave for younger kids or children with disabilities who need care.

- Care leave for individuals other than family members:
  - This is limited to 80 hours (pro-rated for part-time employees) at 2/3 pay. The remaining 1/3 can be supplemented with accrued vacation or comp time.
  - At this time, we will not impose these caps and limitations on care for family members.

- We expanded some uses for the employee’s health and caring for others, but generally our prior policy already provided the benefits required by federal law, and more. Contact your supervisor or HR staff to discuss your use of Paid COVID-19 Leave. To request Paid COVID-19 Leave, you must submit a Paid COVID-19 Leave Request Form to your HR contact for review.

What you can do right now

Please continue to have regular conversations with your manager or supervisor. Regardless of your role or priority level, update your pandemic availability, skills profile, and contact information in Self Service (i.e. use the My Personal Information section in Self Service). Keep your information updated. While not everyone will be contacted for temporary reassignment or redeployment, we are already working with some of our colleagues who want to lend their skills and expertise where they are needed most.

Stay-at-Home is a unique and challenging situation that requires each of us to do our part so we can provide the critical services that Minnesota depends on. You can help by:
• Staying current in your situational awareness by visiting the Be Ready MN and MDH websites, and
• Checking your work email, voicemail, and any other contact sources you identified in Self Service during the workday and responding to messages quickly.

Thank you so much for your continued commitment to public service, especially right now. Stay safe, and stay healthy.

Marcus Schmit
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