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**From:** Hatch, Tom  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 6, 2020 6:02 PM  
**To:** Orange County  
**Subject:** Planning Guidance For Returning Employees to the Workplace

Hello County Family,

As all of California moves towards reopening non-essential businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, the County of Orange (County) will also be moving into “new normal” ways of conducting business and a changed staff working environment. It is each department head’s responsibility to implement what meets the operational needs of their department. While there are no specific dates of when each department will begin bringing employees back to the workplace, this guidance will help in the planning for this process.

When evaluating the “new normal” of conducting County business, it may be necessary to have employees return to the workplace who have been given the option to telecommute during the current pandemic. The best approach is to strategically and carefully phase this change in over a period of time when the stay at home order is lifted or as essential service needs change.

Telecommuting remains strongly recommended for employees that are able to perform their essential job duties from home for the near future as we all continue to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic. Departments will evaluate work demands and it is understood that telecommuting will not work in several areas of County services.

When having employees return to the workplace, determine the reasons it is necessary to have an employee return from telecommuting. Consider the following questions, “Is it operationally necessary and can you ensure social distancing if employees return to the workplace in the near future?” “Can this be done in phases?” As we know, employees will be wondering why certain employees can continue to telecommute and others cannot so it will be important to communicate the reasons at the earliest time.

The County is obligated to ensure a safe and healthy workplace for employees. Some employees will be concerned about safety issues when they return to the workplace. Implementing safety measures before employees return to the office may help to ease concerns. Below are items to consider when it is determined necessary to return additional employees to the workplace.

Pre-planning and procurement:

- Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding is available to assist with facility and supply costs associated with COVID-19. Please contact your budget team to determine any potential available funding resources.
- Create and install signage that:
  - Reminds staff to remain six feet apart for social distancing.
  - Explains that two persons (based on elevator size) at a time maximum are to be in an elevator.
  - Reminds employees not to congregate in break rooms or other common areas.
- In buildings where customers will be standing in line, place floor signage indicating where to stand to maintain six feet of social distancing.
- For work with the public at a counter setting or reception area, ensure social distancing guidelines are met.
- Work with Facilities to determine how furniture and/or cubicles could be rearranged to ensure six feet of social distancing. Temporarily discontinue the use of shared workspaces.
- For cubicles with low or no walls, consider social distancing and how your department will meet the requirements.

- Remove chairs in reception areas and limit chairs in meeting rooms as necessary to ensure social distancing.
- Ensure employees have access to hand sanitizer and/or wipes.
- Evaluate methods to reduce paper processes and move towards electronic processes.
- Evaluate methods to reduce frequent touch points between people where COVID-19 can be spread.
- Ensure increased facility cleaning occurs, including increased cleaning of commonly touched surfaces.
- Work to install touchless hand sanitizer or wipes stations in high traffic areas where possible.
- Ensure Personal Protective Equipment is available as appropriate for staff in close contact with clients where social distancing guidelines cannot be maintained.
- Hold ad-hoc meetings, solicit and/or listen to employee suggestions for improving safety in the workplace. Hold a meeting and/or gather employee suggestions before providing the direction for staff to return to the workplace.

Social distancing remains one of the strongest defenses against the spread of COVID-19. To further ensure social distancing in County facilities:

- Determine if staggered work schedules, including intermittent telecommuting, is possible to manage the amount of staff in the workplace at any given time.
- If many employees are to return to the workplace, operationally determine if their return can be staggered instead of all employees returning at the same time.
- Stagger employee breaks/lunches when operationally feasible.
- Ensure social distancing in meetings utilizing telecommunication when needed even when staff are in the office, i.e. employees call into the meeting from their workspace.
- Utilize non-physical contact greetings in lieu of handshakes.

Communicating continued safety practices to employees:

- Encourage employees to wash hands frequently. Public facing employees should wash hands or use hand sanitizer every thirty minutes.
- Face coverings continue to be recommended when in a general office setting.
- Encourage employees to avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Remind employees to cough/sneeze into their elbow or tissues and not their hands.
- Encourage employees to conduct a self-assessment of their health before coming to work and call in sick if they have any of the following symptoms:
  - Fever,
  - New or unusual cough,
  - Shortness of breath,
  - Or at least two of the following symptoms: chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell.
- If an employee appears ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while at work, immediately require them to go home. If they refuse, contact Human Resource Services immediately.
- If an employee becomes sick during the day and is required to leave work or reports that they have become ill after leaving work, ensure that their work area is cleaned and disinfected prior to use by another employee.
- Consider implementing temperature checks prior to employees entering a particular workplace based on the operational needs of that workplace. Staff with a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or greater are to be sent home immediately. If temperature checks are operationally appropriate, ensure checks are conducted in an area that allows for privacy. Please consult Employee Health and HRS if you are considering temperature checks.

This is not an all-inclusive list. This guidance does not supersede any conflicting or more restrictive orders issued by local governments, the State of California, or the Federal Government. Please consider any other ideas that ensure a safe and healthy workplace for all employees and customers.

Consistent communication with employees before and after they return to the workplace about implemented safety practices will contribute to a successful transition into the “new normal” ways of conducting business.

As the COVID-19 pandemic changes, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) may provide revised or additional guidance regarding COVID-19. Additional guidance can be found at the following links:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

CDC “Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes”:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

Human Resource Services is available to assist as our organization as well as the entire Orange County community plans to carefully return employees back into the workplace. Please contact your Human Resources representative for assistance or any questions regarding employees and COVID-19. Thanks.

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**COUNTY OF ORANGE**  
**HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES**

