Summary for COVID-19 response as public access curbed

Employees can rest assured the Kent County leadership team is working diligently to manage the evolving pandemic now known as COVID-19. Department Directors and Row Officers have been briefed on the County’s response plan and business continuity opportunities were discussed. Employees are encouraged to be extra kind to citizens during these challenging times, and we will do all we can to support each of you. Please be vigilant and take care of your health.

SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

The new coronavirus, COVID-19, is similar to a pneumonia-like infection. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) believes at this time that symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

A. OBJECTIVES.

- Kent County’s Primary Goal: Protect Employees and Citizens
  - Reduce the spread of disease among staff.
  - Protect people at higher risk for complications.
  - Maintain critical operations.
  - Minimize impact on residents, customers and businesses.
  - Be proactive, rather than reactive, by taking measures to minimize risk.
  - If the pandemic significantly impacts Kent County operations, the County Response is subject to change as needed, when conditions change and as events play out.

B. KEY BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

- If a government shutdown becomes necessary, essential employees are defined as those who will be required to work in their worksites/offices/vehicles or from home so that critical government services can still be provided. Non-essential departments and affected hourly employees are defined as those considered non-critical during a pandemic. Salaried (FLSA exempt) employees should expect to be considered essential. The chart below shows the County’s plan of action for essential employees if a pandemic occurs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential – Front Line (Report as normal)</th>
<th># of Staff</th>
<th>Essential – Work from Home/Vehicle</th>
<th># of Staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>Full</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency Communications</td>
<td>Full</td>
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<td>Emergency Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wastewater Facilities</td>
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<td>County Administrator</td>
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<td>Facilities Management</td>
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<td>Information Technology</td>
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<td>Finance</td>
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<td>Parks</td>
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<td>Engineering</td>
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<td>Building Inspection</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Essential assignments subject to change depending upon on situation*
Staff should identify equipment that remote workers could utilize.

Essential employees who will be working from home should prepare by developing a “ready bag” that they take home with them at the end of each day.

All employees are subject to be called back to work during a government shutdown, depending on the need and circumstances.

An hours code may be established for payroll purposes to track all hours worked due to the pandemic. Additionally, an expense account may be established and access granted to departments who will be purchasing items related to the pandemic.

Consider potential impact on County services.
- Be prepared to backfill positions if employees are absent.
- Communicate various scenarios with staff to ensure understanding.
- Verify contact information for coworkers, critical staff, and other departments.

C. WORKPLACE EXPOSURE

Staff with increased risk include older employees, those with existing serious health conditions and those involved in wastewater and public safety, such as EMS. Wastewater and EMS employees should immediately change clothing and even shower at the end of each shift (before going home) to minimize risk of exposure to family members.
- No handshaking.
- Minimize hand-to-face touching.
- Minimize in-person meetings.
- Use email, phones and teleconferencing/webinars during a pandemic, rather than face-to-face contact.
- Effectively handle materials and customers/patients that could be contaminated.
- Wash hands often and practice other sanitary means to prevent spread of germs.
- If an employee is diagnosed/confirmed positive with the virus, immediately contact your Department Head and the Personnel Director, who in turn will inform the County Administrator for action steps to be followed. At that point, work surfaces shall be disinfected before allowing employees to return to the area.

D. WORKPLACE POLICIES

County Administrator will consider and coordinate cases/events.
- Presumed or Confirmed Cases of coronavirus in an employee or immediate family member – If a medical official determines that an employee/immmediate family member is presumed or confirmed to have the virus, then the employee shall promptly inform the Department Head and Personnel Director, and the County will pay the employee for a minimum of two weeks, not to exceed three weeks, based on medical professional directives and/or as provided by Federal or State law.
- Exposure Event – Quarantine of employee by medical staff – County will pay employee a minimum of 2 weeks at their current hourly rate, or as provided by Federal or State law.
- Potential Exposure – Employees suspecting possible exposure to the virus, without medical confirmation, must immediately contact their Department Head and Personnel Office to explain the circumstances. Such employees may request remote work/telework, subject to approval by the County Administrator, and shall be required to use accrued leave, except as provided by Federal or State law.
- Government Shut-down – County will pay employees their current hourly rate, or if
deemed essential or working remotely at the overtime rate, or as provided by Federal or State law.

- **Public Access Closure** – Employees report to work and perform duties as normal, but public access to building(s) denied or severely limited as determined by the County Administrator.

- **Liberal Leave** – Non-essential employees, with approval of the Supervisor or Department Head, may use accrued vacation leave, compensatory time, or personal leave without the normal prior request requirements due to issues related to child care, family care, elder care, or travel to work restrictions.

- **On the job Exposure** – County will cover the percentage of normal pay that worker’s compensation does not cover, up to 3 weeks, without requiring use of accrued leave, or as provided by Federal or State law.

- **Payroll** – Employees shall continue to accurately report time worked and submit timesheets, except during incapacity. When complete payroll records are not available, the County will pay full-time employees a minimum of 40 (35) hours per work week on the normal payday schedule, and then retroactively pay any overtime or other such compensation when deemed possible, or as provided by Federal or State law. Contractual/temporary/part-time employees should not expect compensation unless physically at work, except as required by Federal or State law.

- **Absence Verification** – Normal medical documentation is waived for coronavirus related absences, although the employee shall be required to promptly inform the Supervisor/Department Head and Personnel Office of the absence with an expected return date, and attest to the pandemic related absence as part of the payroll process for possible Federal/State government reimbursement. Employees must submit forms for FMLA qualifying absences as provided by law.

- If an employee chooses to personally travel to a high-risk country and is quarantined upon return to the US, the County will not pay the employee during this timeframe. The employee would have the ability to utilize any earned leave (sick, vacation, etc.) while quarantined.

- The County reserves the right to prohibit an employee presumed to have the virus or if an immediate family member is presumed to have the virus from the workplace.

- Levy Court and County Administrator have the ability to make immediate decisions which impact the County’s services and employees during a pandemic.

**E. INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES – Immediate Implementation**

- Employees should clean hands often by washing for at least 20 seconds using soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available.

- Employees should stay home when sick.

- Employees should routinely clean commonly touched surfaces and sanitize all areas of their workspace daily.

- County will place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace and in high visibility locations.

- County will provide soap, water, and alcohol-based hand rubs in multiple locations and routinely refill them.
F. **ENCOURAGE SOCIAL DISTANCING** – *Immediate implementation*

- Social distancing is an intervention to increase the physical distance between people and reduce the spread of disease. These may include:
  - Implementing procedures for critical employees to work remotely.
  - The County Administrator can authorize/deny/revoke remote work/telework, if necessary, as provided by guidelines.
  - The County Administrator can permit flexible work hours (e.g. staggered shifts), if possible.
  - Assigning technology and infrastructure as approved to support multiple employees authorized to work from home.
  - Closing a building or creating one entrance to a building to minimize risk of exposure to staff and contamination of areas.
  - Placing appropriate signage at the designated entrance for customers, visitors, etc.
  - Placing a locked drop-box or similarly secure method at the designated entrance to the building, as needed, where documents and payments can be submitted safely, without the need to interact directly with staff.
  - Providing email and telephone number on signage for assistance to customers utilizing the drop box.
  - Establishing employee business travel and training restrictions to minimize risk.

G. **SEPARATE SICK EMPLOYEES** - *Immediate implementation*

- Employees who report to work having a fever or flu-like symptoms upon arrival, or who become sick during the workday, should separate from others, inform their supervisor, and go home. Ensure that:
  - Managers and employees review County policies and expect that sick employees must stay home.
  - Employees should **NOT** go directly to the hospital or urgent care unless directed by your healthcare provider or the Health Department. This will minimize the risk of exposure risk all concerned parties. *If the employee has other health conditions or is otherwise considered high risk, that information must be disclosed immediately to a physician and/or the Health Department during the call.*

H. **ANTICIPATE ABSENTEEISM**

- Prepare for co-worker absences resulting from personal illness, caring for ill family members, and dismissal of early childhood programs and K-12 schools. Be ready to adapt business practices and processes to maintain critical operations.
  - Employees should be cross-trained to carry out critical functions so the workplace can operate when co-workers are out.
  - Prepare for temporary suspension of non-essential operations, if necessary.
  - Be flexible and differentiate between critical and non-critical services if staff shortages occur due to illnesses or quarantines.
  - Consider “what-if” scenarios with essential and non-essential staff to prepare.

I. **PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS** - *Immediate implementation*

- Our government is only as healthy as our employees. Employees should immediately take standard steps to prepare for staying at home, if needed:
  - Store a two-week supply of water and food.
Make sure to have enough prescription drugs at home.
Keep non-prescription drugs and other health supplies on hand. This includes pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold aids, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
Get copies of electronic health records from the doctor, hospital, or pharmacy.
Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would like to be cared for if they got sick, and what's needed to care for them at home.
Try to minimize being in large groups, events and traveling by plane – any direct contact with others you can reasonably avoid will help.
Contact the Employee Assistance Program (information available on the Employee Portal) if emotional support or similar assistance needed.

J. COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL - Immediate implementation

- Endeavor to keep workforce informed about the outbreak.
- Provide positive, factual information which will help calm and encourage staff.
- Establish clear lines of communication between essential staff members and departments to ensure critical services can be provided.
- Provide timely and factual press releases as needed to keep community informed.
- Utilize automated call line to inform employees of issues or modified operations.

K. CORONAVIRUS EXPOSURE - Immediate implementation

- Employees must immediately notify, by phone or email only, their Department Head and Personnel Office if they have experienced an exposure or received a presumed or confirmed diagnosis of coronavirus.
- Employees who have been medically diagnosed with the virus or who were quarantined must submit a physician’s release to return to work. If the employee was self-quarantined due to exposure, then the employee must be symptom free for fourteen days before returning to work.
- Work with local health officials as needed to manage the pandemic.

L. WORKFORCE INVOLVEMENT - Immediate implementation

- Ensure that every employee deemed essential is aware of the Department & County Response and is ready to act immediately.
- Every department should test the plan to help detect gaps or problems that need attention by utilizing “what if” scenarios prior to shut down or events.
- Every employee should be prepared to act immediately if an employee illness or event occurs.
- Every employee should know and understand the role they will play if a severe event occurs.
- Employees who may be classified initially as non-essential could become essential in the event of major outbreaks and/or quarantine of essential employees. Be prepared!

Questions about specific department/office response plans should be directed to the affected Department Director or Row Office holder.

(posted 03/17/20)