



William D. Gore, Sheriff

San Diego County Sheriff's Department

Employee Relations Bulletin

March 2020

## **Be informed + Be prepared = COVID-19**

### **SUPERVISORS AND MANAGING SICK LEAVE USE**

County health officials have been busy urging residents, local municipalities, schools, businesses and community and religious organizations to prepare for a potential outbreak of the novel coronavirus, which causes COVID-19. The document will continue to evolve as we receive additional questions and as information progresses.

*Patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection have reported symptoms ranging from mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms generally include:*

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

*At this time, the CDC believes symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.*

**As a Sheriff's Supervisor now is the time to talk to your teams about when and how to call in sick. Encourage employees who are sick to stay home from work and lead by example, if you are sick stay home.**

#### **What to do if an Employee Comes to Work Sick**

During the response to COVID-19, in the event an employee comes to work with symptoms of COVID-19 (described above), talk to the employee in a conference room (separated from other employees) and strongly encourage the employee to use their sick leave until they are asymptomatic.

If the employee refuses to go home sick, please discuss with your supervisor/manager, Medical Liaison Unit (MLU) and Employee Relations regarding directions on how to properly proceed.

The Department can order an employee to go home sick or direct employees to use their sick leave. Supervisor's do not have the authority to make this decision unilaterally. This step should be done with an abundance of caution (with HR and management's oversight). Supervisors must ensure that they are acting in a non-discriminatory and non-retaliatory manner when deciding to send an employee home sick.

Ideally, it should not come to this situation. Hopefully, supervisors can have a frank discussion with the employee and encourage the employee to use their sick leave until they are asymptomatic.

1. An employee should not report to work if they have COVID-19. If an employee does come to work and reports they have COVID-19, the employee should go home and contact MLU to make sick leave arrangements (FML). Additionally,

maintain the employee's privacy, but report this information to your manager, so it can be reported to Public Health Officials. Any notifications to other employees or customers will be made by the Department.

2. If an employee has exhausted their sick leave, they can use their vacation or comp time accruals. If they have no accruals contact MLU for further instruction.
3. If the employee insists it is just a cold or allergies, in order to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for all employees, a supervisor should act in a consistent manner and apply the same standard to all employees who are symptomatic and request they use sick leave.
4. If a supervisor learns the employee has traveled to an area where there is widespread community transmission of COVID-19 or been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Determine whether teleworking is an option. Consult MLU regarding this matter. (Refer to Q12 of the Employee FAQ)
5. If sent home, employees should remain on leave until they are asymptomatic. If an employee who went home sick provides a doctor's note to you or MLU indicating they can return to work, they may return.
6. If an employee who is not sick, inquires if they can stay home because they are worried about getting sick. Supervisors should inform staff are required to report to work. Employees can request vacation time or compensatory time and after determining operational needs, the Appointing Authority may approve.

Like any other medical issue supervisors must be careful to protect employee privacy rights and avoid stigmatizing any employees.

### **Most U.S. Workers Remain at Low Risk of Exposure**

At this time, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasizes that, while the novel coronavirus, COVID-19 poses a potentially serious public health threat, the risk to individuals is dependent on exposure. For most people in the United States, including most types of workers, the risk of infection with COVID-19 is currently low.

Here is some interim CDC guidance that may help Sheriff supervisors prevent workplace exposures to COVID-19:

- Encourage sick employees to stay home if they have symptoms of acute respiratory illness.
- Have a plan in place should a large number of employees get sick or need to work from home.
- If an employee shows up to work sick or becomes sick during work hours send them home.
- Encourage sneezing and coughing etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees.
- Perform routine cleaning of all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops and doorknobs.



**References:**

[Coronavirus in San Diego](#)

[Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

