



CTDOT RETURN-TO-THE-WORKPLACE PLAYBOOK & FAQ

(FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)

[Updated on June 30, 2021]

This document has been developed by the Connecticut Department of Transportation in alignment with guidance issued by the Department of Administrative Services in conjunction with the Office of Labor Relations and the Department of Public Health and is **subject to change** as new information becomes available.

The CTDOT COVID Playbook & FAQ provides guidance that will assist employees in understanding current rules and procedures related to COVID, reentry into the workplace and the most recent telework guidance. It includes many questions that have been asked by employees in the Commissioner’s virtual townhall series and compiled answers.

PLEASE NOTE: compliance with all directives regardless of COVID vaccination status is required. Currently, there is no mandate for employees to be vaccinated, nor are employees required to provide their vaccination status. Therefore, compliance with these rules, whether vaccinated or not, remains mandatory.

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Individual Health & Safety

Safety Directives

The Department's Occupational Health and Safety Division (OH&S) issues Safety Directives to manage protocols and mitigate COVID-19 risks in our workplace. These directives integrate CTDOT's operational needs and evolving federal, state and industry COVID-19 prevention standards and guidance. Safety Directives can be found [here](#) and may be revised as needed or updated in response to emerging requirements.

Self-Assessment

No one knows how you feel better than you. Before coming to work each day, employees should perform a daily self-assessment to verify they do not have any typical COVID-19 symptoms, such as a high temperature (+100.4°F), fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. **If you're experiencing any of these symptoms, stay home, contact your supervisor and Human Resources, and seek medical direction.** [[Employee Daily Self-Assessment and Actions Safety Directive; SD-COVID-3-060121](#)]

- **I am overwhelmed/panicking about returning to the office, what should I do?**
Employees should be aware that our Employee Assistance Program offered by the Lexington Group is available and provides a variety of benefits and services to assist employees and their dependents in their time of need, especially during these stressful times. If you or any of your dependents are struggling with adjusting to changes associated with COVID, you can confidentially contact 1-800-676-HELP (4357) or <http://www.the-lexington-group.com/>.
- **If I have an underlying health condition/I am immunocompromised that puts me at high risk of COVID, can I continue to telework?**
Per the [Transition Telework Agreement](#) signed between the State and SEBAC on June 17, employees who are COVID-fragile can seek an ADA accommodation to continue their telework situation and/or telework more than the 50% limit per pay period after July 1. More information is available [here](#) in the Telework section.
- **What should I do if I'm experiencing COVID symptoms?**
Employees who have any COVID-like symptoms (i.e. fever, cough, or shortness of breath, etc.) are required to stay home, contact their supervisor and HR, and seek medical guidance from a licensed health care provider. [A list of symptoms can be found in the [Employee Daily Self-Assessment and Actions Safety Directive; SD-COVID-3-060121](#)]
- **If I'm experiencing COVID symptoms, can I telework instead of taking sick leave?**
COVID-like symptoms (i.e. fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should be taken seriously and if an employee is not feeling well/not fit to report to the office or workplace, then they are also generally expected to be not well enough to telework. Employees who are not feeling well should stay home and seek medical guidance. If an employee is COVID positive, telework may be an option for those whose job allows for such, and who feel well enough to do so during the course of the illness.

Temperature / Health Screening

CTDOT will not be screening body temperatures or ask COVID related questions prior to entry to CTDOT facilities. Employees are expected to perform their [daily self-assessment](#) and respond accordingly. As always, if you are not feeling well stay home. [See [Employee Daily Self-Assessment and Actions Safety Directive; SD-COVID-3-060121](#) for more information]

COVID Positives

In cases where an employee tests COVID positive or is experiencing COVID symptoms, the employee should not return to the workplace until he or she has been medically cleared and all required documentation has been submitted to the Department. All employees are required to fully cooperate with the Department's COVID investigations and response protocols. [See [COVID General Response Protocols Safety Directive; SD-COVID-1-060121](#) and [Employee COVID Protocols Safety Directive, SD-COVID-2-052021](#)]

- **What happens when there is a COVID positive in the workplace?**

The Department's [COVID response protocols](#) are activated and OH&S initiates a COVID exposure investigation:

- Close contact co-workers are identified and notified that they should seek medical guidance from their health care provider because of the potential exposure
- A COVID Positive Workplace Notification is generated and distributed via email to all staff
- Any impacted work areas are evaluated and determined if an enhanced sanitizing cleaning regiment is necessary

- **What is considered a "close contact"?**

A close contact is anyone that has been within 6 feet of someone who has recently tested positive for COVID for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

- **What should I do if I'm notified that I'm a "close contact"?**

All employees that are identified as a close contact will be provided with detailed instructions from OH&S. Impacted employees should do the following:

- **Notify your health care professional and follow their medical guidance**, including medical direction on COVID testing (typically, close contacts that have not been vaccinated should be tested for COVID; while testing fully vaccinated individuals is generally not needed in this situation—but speak to your medical professional)
- Notify your supervisor, OH&S, and your HR business partner
- OH&S will provide detailed instructions, but this is the general guidance:
 - If you are asymptomatic & cannot telework (deemed operationally essential), follow the KN95 protocol – continue to come to work, wear a KN95 for 10 days or 7 days with a negative COVID test result
 - If you are asymptomatic & can telework, continue to work from home for 10 days or 7 days with a negative COVID test result
 - If you are symptomatic – you should not work and seek medical attention; you are able to use COVID leave and/or sick leave during this time' during the course of the illness, telework may be an option for

those whose job allows for such, and who feel well enough to do so during the course of the illness.

Quarantine / Isolation

[See [Employee COVID Protocols Safety Directive, SD-COVID-2-052021](#)]

If an individual is identified through contact tracing as having had confirmed contact with a COVID positive case, the individual may opt out of quarantine/isolation if fully vaccinated and documentation is provided. The standard precautionary quarantine period for a close contact is **10 days** if the close contact conducts a Daily Self-Assessment, monitors for COVID symptoms, and has had no symptoms of COVID during the whole 10-day quarantine (day 0 is the is the day of exposure). The close contact KN95 requirement may be lifted after the initial 10-day quarantine period as long as he or she continues to conduct their daily self-monitoring for COVID symptoms for an additional 4 days and they remain symptom free.

The standard precautionary quarantine period for a close contact may be reduced to **7 days** if the close contact conducts their daily self-monitoring for COVID symptoms and he or she has had no symptoms during the whole 7-day quarantine (day 0 is the is the day of exposure) **AND** has been tested for the COVID virus (PCR) on day 5 or later and a negative test result has been received.

- The quarantine period or KN95 restriction period shall not end before 7 days, even if a negative test result was obtained earlier.
- If a test result is still pending at day 7, the person cannot end quarantine until that result is received and is negative.
- The close contact KN95 requirement may be lifted after the initial 10-day quarantine period as long as the close contact continues to conduct their daily self-monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms for an additional 4 days and they remain symptom free.

COVID Testing

All employees that are identified as a close contact to a COVID positive should be tested for the COVID virus, however it is generally not needed in close contact situations with fully vaccinated individuals. Close contact employees working in a congregate setting such as a maintenance, equipment repair or other similar setting are required to be tested for the COVID virus *unless* they have received the COVID vaccine. Testing is to occur no sooner than 5 days from the date of exposure or as directed by the OH&S. If a close contact receives a positive test result, the employee and supervisor will immediately implement the protocols for an Employee Confirmed COVID Positive or Experiencing Symptoms, available [here](#). If an individual is identified through contact tracing as having had confirmed contact with a COVID positive case, the individual may opt out of testing if 1) the individual is fully vaccinated and provides documentation and 2) the individual remains asymptomatic.

- **If I know I have seasonal allergies and/or am experiencing flu-like symptoms, should I get tested for COVID?**
Talk with your medical provider and decide on the best course of action.

- **Why don't I have to get tested for COVID if I'm vaccinated and have been exposed/a close contact?**

You should talk to your health care provider to discuss the appropriate course of action following your exposure. If a vaccinated individual is asymptomatic following a potential COVID exposure, testing is typically not necessary because the risk of infection is so low. However, if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms—regardless of your vaccination status—you should talk to your health care provider and get tested.

COVID Vaccines

While the State of Connecticut strongly encourages COVID vaccinations as a safe and highly effective way to protect against severe illness, hospitalization, and the risk of death from COVID-19, vaccinations are not mandated. Employees should discuss with their health care provider and determine if the benefits of COVID vaccination outweigh the potential concerns. [[See Current Precautionary Control Measures Returning to the Workplace Safety Directive; SD-COVID Current Updated-060121](#)]

- **Will employees be required to get the COVID vaccine?**
No. The State of Connecticut is not mandating COVID vaccinations.
- **What guarantees that everybody working in the Newington Office has gotten both vaccine shots?**
There are no guarantees. Vaccinations are strongly encouraged, but not required. There is no convenient or reliable way to determine who is or is not fully vaccinated, and employees are not required to provide this information. This is why safety measures such as hybrid telework, social distancing, and mask wearing, among other rules are important for everyone's safety.
- **Will DOT be asking employees their vaccine status?**
An employee's vaccine status is protected patient health information which only the patient or individual can choose to disclose voluntarily. In circumstances such as when an employee is identified as having close contact with a COVID positive case at work, an employee may volunteer to provide vaccination information, as this status has an effect on testing protocols.
- **Are employees eligible for any incentives if they did get vaccinated?**
Yes. Employees who choose to do so, can voluntarily provide proof of their COVID vaccination, and will be provided with up to two hours of comp time. Talk to your Human Resources representative if you have questions.
- **Can I ask my colleagues if they have been vaccinated?**
While employees can voluntarily share their vaccination status if they feel comfortable, coworkers shouldn't ask and colleagues shouldn't feel compelled to answer questions about their vaccination status—just like any other personal medical decision or health matter—you are entitled to keep it private and confidential.

- **Will employees be grouped together based on their vaccine status (vaccinated v. unvaccinated)?**
No. Employees will not be separated based on their vaccination status.
- **How will vaccinated vs. non-vaccinated employees be distinguished?**
An employee's vaccination status will not be distinguishable. Employees should continue to operate with caution and assume everyone potentially poses a COVID risk, which is why all employees must wear a mask unless isolated alone.
- **Will vaccinated employees be required to wear a mask?**
Yes. Masks are required for all employees unless they are isolated alone from others.
- **What if I am immunocompromised and/or unvaccinated and not comfortable disclosing my vaccination status?**
Employees are not being asked to disclose their vaccination status, unless voluntarily offered to HR for the purposes of:
 - Becoming exempt from mandatory COVID testing and isolation protocols when identified as a close contact
 - Receiving up to two hours of comp time for getting the vaccine
 An employee does not have to disclose their health condition/status, such as being immunocompromised, unless he or she voluntarily decides to pursue an ADA accommodation or FMLA entitlement.

Masks (Face Covering)

A face covering is defined as anything that is intended to and used for covering both the nose and mouth to prevent the spread of potentially contagious viruses that are transmitted through the respiratory system. They can be, but are not limited to, manufactured or homemade cloth masks, surgical masks, or other similar coverings. [See [Use of Face Coverings as a Precautionary Control Measure Safety Directive; SD-COVID-4-060121](#)]

- **What types of masks should be used?**
The type of face covering required will be based on the specific circumstances (current face masking protocol [Safety Directives](#)) and may change in response to changing conditions. The levels of face coverings include:
 - **Level 1** – Single Layer, Gaiter or Cloth Face Covering – Single layer face coverings provide limited control effectiveness but may be appropriate for some applications when the potential for viral spread is limited.
Durability – Washable, reusable, long life expectancy
 - **Level 2** – Multi-Layer Cloth Face Coverings – These types of face coverings have become very common and usually have either 2 or 3 distinct layers. They can be secured behind the head or over the ear and have been proven to be an effective control measure in most situations.
Durability – Washable, reusable, long life expectancy

- **Level 3** – Multi-Layer Paper or Composite Medical/Surgical Face Coverings – Face coverings of this type are usually applicable to medical or health care environments and may be used in other environments where a higher level of control is required.
Durability – Disposable, limited reuse ability, life expectancy in the office/administrative environment may be as long as 2-3 days however, daily replacement should be expected depending upon use. Replacement required if it gets dirty or wet. Life expectancy in the field environment is very limited and may need to be replaced more often.
- **Level 4** – KN95 - Durable Multi-Layer Paper or Fiber Face Covering – The KN95 is the highest level of face covering before moving to a respirator which requires entry into the CTDOT Respiratory Protection Program and medical clearance. The KN95 mask is used when the potential for viral spread is high especially in congregate work settings when physical distancing is difficult.
Durability – Disposable, reusable, life expectancy in the field may be as long as 7 days, replacement required if it gets dirty or wet.
- **What about N95 masks?**
N95 masks are intended for healthcare personnel and other workers exposed to airborne hazards not effectively controlled by other means.
- **Do employees have to wear a mask?**
Generally, YES – with some exceptions:
An appropriate **face covering IS required**, *even when there is no one else in the building or area when...*
 - Employees enter any CTDOT facility
 - Moving/walking to-from a location in the building: between the building entrance and your workspace, in hallways, stairwells
 - In common/shared areas: conference rooms, restrooms, break rooms/cafeteria, elevators
 - In vehicles with other people
- A **face covering is NOT required** when:
 - A minimum of 6 feet of physical distance can be maintained at all times between people
 - Employees are alone, in a segregated workspace such as an office, conference room or vehicle
 - While an employee is in a cubicle by themselves, where the partition walls or other physical separations extend at least 30 inches above the desktop
 - Outside when prolonged close contact with others is not required
- **Am I required to wear a mask/face-covering...**
 - **...if I've have been vaccinated?**
Yes, unless you are alone at your workstation, can maintain physical distance, or are outside without prolonged close contact to others. According to the CDC, although COVID-19 vaccines are effective at keeping you from getting sick, scientists are still learning how well vaccines prevent you from spreading the

virus to others, even if you do not have symptoms. Our face covering protocol is a preventative measure to help continue to limit the spread of COVID and will remain in place until further notice.

- **mask...even though the Governor/CTDPH has lifted mask restrictions for those who have been vaccinated?**
Yes. The rolled back mask restrictions and guidance issued by the Governor included exceptions and flexibility for Connecticut businesses. For the state, DAS has issued re-opening guidelines for state facilities, which is reflected in DOT's mask protocols and is informed by the Department's business needs and safety considerations.
- **mask... even when no one is around me?**
You only need to wear a mask when no one is around you and you are 1. entering a DOT building 2. anytime you leave your workstation/cubicle 3. in a common/shared area (bathroom, break room, copier)
- **mask... even if I've already recovered from COVID/have antibodies?**
Yes, unless you are alone at your workstation, can maintain physical distance, or are outside without prolonged close contact to others. Our face covering protocol is a preventative measure to help continue to limit the spread of COVID and while rare, cases of reinfection with COVID-19 have been reported to the CDC.
- **mask... even if I have difficulty breathing or a health condition like asthma?**
Generally, mild or intermittent respiratory conditions, like asthma, would not serve as a reason to not wear a loose-fitting face covering. However, individuals with concerns can participate in the ADA process to seek an accommodation.
- **mask... even if no one is in the halls near me?**
Yes. Employees must continue to wear a mask in hallways, conference rooms, elevators, and other common areas.
- **mask...even if the two employees sharing a car are vaccinated?**
Yes. Masks are required for more than one person in a vehicle until instructed otherwise.
- **mask...even at a construction site or outside?**
A face covering is NOT required if you are outside and prolonged contact with others is not required.
- **mask...even in the bathroom?**
Face coverings are required any time you leave your workstation and/or are entering common areas.
- **mask...even in the gym/fitness center?**
Yes, unless you are alone in the fitness center space.

- **Will DOT be providing masks to employees?**

Employees are required to have an appropriate level face covering with them at all times while in the workplace. If an employee forgets or misplaces their mask, additional masks will be available at security desks and with your Bureau's designated [COVID supply](#) contact.

Social / Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is used in conjunction with other control measures, such as face coverings, as part of an overall strategy to limit or prevent the spread of potentially contagious viruses from one person to another. When a specific separation distance is established, such as **6 feet** in the case of COVID, every effort is made to achieve that physical distance. When physical distancing requirements can't be met because of the nature of the work being done or the specific work environment, additional precautionary measures such as wearing a face mask or limiting the number of people in a specific location is required. [See [Precautionary Physical Distancing as a Control Measure Safety Directive; SD-COVID-5-060121](#)]

- **Is the expectation that we will continue to communicate with colleagues using TEAMS since I'm assuming the department is still going to require social distancing of 6', which is very difficult to discuss plans, dgn files, etc., while sitting 6' away?**

The continued use of TEAMS is encouraged; however crew members can collaborate in person as necessary. Per the physical distancing protocol, when distancing can't be met because of the nature of the work being done, additional precautionary measures such as wearing a mask are required.

Travel Restrictions

Mandates and quarantine requirements related to travel are no longer in effect in Connecticut as of March 19, 2021. COVID-related restrictions for state employee travel have also been lifted.

Facilities

Badge/Work ID

Work badges/IDs must be displayed at all times when at work. Lanyards and plastic ID Holders can be picked up at the Security Desk at Newington Headquarters. If you have lost or misplaced your work ID badge, please contact Security Office at 860-594-3333 and be advised, there is a \$10 fee for a replacement badge (EX.O.-22).

- **Will Security be available to update staff badges for building access?**
Staff badges do not need to be updated or reissued for new security features at headquarters. However, Security will be available to replace lost or stolen ID badges.

Bathrooms/Restrooms

Touchless bathroom features have been upgraded at many CTDOT facilities. In some cases, bathroom entrance doors may be propped open to reduce contact of the doors as a high touch surface. Shared bathrooms are considered common areas—there are no restricted occupancy limits on the restrooms, but masks are required.

- **When are touchless bathroom fixtures (and water fountains) coming to the District Offices?**
Districts have already been upgraded with touchless bathroom fixtures & touchless water fountains.

Building Access / Hours of Operations - Headquarters

Normal business hours will resume, including the hours associated with Alternative Work Schedules. Unless authorized for additional building access, employees will be able to access most CTDOT facilities between 6:30 am and 6:00 pm.

- **Will extended Headquarters hours continue so that we can go into the office sporadically to pick up/drop off work/perform office duties?**
Regular business hours will apply. Employees should follow the hours of work for their standard schedule or approved Alternative Work Schedule.

Building Capacity / Occupancy

While there are no longer any building occupancy restrictions, DAS has instructed agencies to consider workspace distribution as a factor in work schedules, including telework, since social distancing requirements, regardless of employee vaccination status, are still in place.

Cafeteria - Headquarters

The cafeteria remains closed and is scheduled to reopen on August 2. The cafeteria will operate Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM – 1:30 PM initially and will be modified as building occupancy and/or demand increases. Employees should plan to bring food/beverages and use the kitchenettes, purchase food/beverages from the new micro-mart, or plan for alternatives.

- **Are there any plans to bring back a fully functioning cafeteria?**
Yes. A modified schedule/limited cafeteria will be available starting August 2. As more details become available, the information will be shared with employees.
- **What will the cafeteria be like? all prepackaged foods? healthy choices?**
Initially the cafeteria will be offering only grab and go foods, including freshly prepared, hot and cold choices available daily. Coffee service will re-open as before. As demand increases, the cafeteria will be expanding healthy options and pre-packaged offerings in response to the cafeteria survey feedback. Additionally, the cafeteria is undergoing other changes, including improved Wi-Fi and the installation of a new countertop along the wall with power outlets for charging/using devices.

Cleaning/Disinfecting

In facilities that have contractor cleaning services, those services will remain at the current level until further notice. In those facilities, for example, cleaning crews are continuously sanitizing high touch points and common areas such as bathrooms, hallways, and elevators throughout the day and these services will continue after July 1. In addition to cleaning crews, each employee has an important role in keeping our workplace as clean and healthy as possible. Employees are responsible for their individual work areas and shared space/equipment. Cleaning and [disinfecting supplies](#) are available to all employees for the purposes of routinely cleaning and disinfecting their personal workspace and commonly used office equipment.

- **What are the plans for the cleaning of the offices once staff occupancy increases?**
In facilities that have contracted cleaning services, continuous cleaning throughout the day in addition to evening cleaning will continue as building occupancy increases.
- **Will the cleaners for each of the District Offices be monitored for compliance with the proper sanitizing and cleaning guidelines to protect against COVID? How can we be sure the cleaners are properly cleaning the work areas, bathrooms, and high touch areas?**
Cleaning crews have been trained in proper sanitizing protocols and are overseen by CTDOT Property & Facilities. While cleaning crews will focus on common and high touch areas, employees are responsible for their individual work areas and shared space/equipment. [Disinfecting supplies](#) and hand sanitizer is widely available in the Districts for everyone's protection and use.

Common Areas/Shared Spaces

Employees must wear a mask in all common areas from the time they enter the building until the time they arrive at their workstation and at any time they leave their workstation/move around common areas (i.e. in hallways and stairwells, restrooms, breakrooms). Signage and

hand sanitizer stations are located in most common areas such as building entry points, lobbies, near elevators, kitchens, and other locations throughout the facilities.

Conference Rooms

Employees are encouraged to conduct virtual meetings if possible as a safer alternative to conference rooms. Occupancy limits and other restrictions for conference rooms will remain in place until further notice, but will be adjusted as allowed. Conference rooms are posted with restrictions and seating has been limited.

- **Will all conference rooms be equipped with video conferencing technology?**
Yes, adding video conferencing technology to all conference rooms is the Department's goal. The timing of technology installation depends on budget availability.
- **Are external guests/visitors allowed to attend meetings in DOT conference rooms?**
Employees are encouraged to continue to use video conferencing/TEAMS, however in-person meetings can be scheduled for conference rooms, as long as occupancy restrictions are observed. Visitors and external meeting participants will be required to follow all CTDOT COVID safety protocols. See [Visitors / Meetings section](#).

Copiers/Printers

Shared copiers and printers will not have restrictions. Disinfecting cleaning supplies (typically sanitizing spray and paper towels) and/or hand sanitizer will be available at shared copiers/printers for use. [Do not spray directly on the equipment or glass.] If sanitizing materials are not at a location, see the designated [COVID supply](#) contact for your Bureau or location.

Cubicles / Desk / Layout

Workspaces throughout the Department are under review and many are in the process of being updated. Cubicle size and configurations are based on business and operational needs and are not strictly tied to COVID concerns that continue to evolve. Wherever possible the cubicle size is 8' x 8' and generally provide 6 feet of distance between employees. Additionally, at Newington headquarters new frosted glass shields have been installed on glass walls and partitions in order to maintain natural light, while increasing privacy and uniformity throughout the building. As a reminder, employees should not post anything on the glass, plexiglass partitions and/or put anything on top of storage bins or partition walls.

- **What will be the minimum area (8' x 8'?) for each cubicle moving forward? How high should the cubicle walls be?**
Generally, the average cubicle area size, when possible is 8'x8'. The partition height along aisles is 65", between workstations is either 65" or 54" with 11" transparent Plexiglass, and along interior and exterior windows is 42".
- **Are the cubicles configured in such a way that the employee's back is to the entrance of each cubicle? If there should be an emergency, the employee does not have a chance to respond, partly, because there is no peripheral vision.**

New configurations are intended to increase safety. Previously, far too many work areas were in maze configurations or isolated in safety “dead ends,” which would hinder an employee’s ability to quickly respond to an emergency. New configurations ensure there is a clear line of site to exit signs and direct pathways to the closest floor exits.

- **Will my office be given advanced notice if we are to be relocated from our present location? Or if desk assignments are to be changed?**

As each floor is redesigned, discussions will occur within Bureau, division and unit leadership on layouts and desk assignments. Talk to your supervisor about specific location/desk assignment questions you may have.

- **Will all the changes to office furniture/locations be completed prior to our return to the building full time?**

The Department intends to maximum the flexibility afforded by the current telework situation while workstations are packed, under construction and/or are unavailable for staff. Employees should contact their supervisor to discuss work schedules during furniture removal and installation.

- **If we are all getting new furniture is it possible to get standing desks? Has the Department given any consideration to providing stand up desks and more ergonomic chairs in the office considering new equipment/desks are currently being purchased?**

The Department is looking at deploying a standing desk option (a manual, adjustable standing desk device) for employees that are interested. The timing of deploying the standing desk device is dependent on budget availability. Employees that require ergonomic office equipment for medical reason should pursue an ADA accommodation.

- **How does the use of standup desks impact COVID concerns and privacy concerns?**

Office configurations, while mindful of COVID and privacy concerns, are not based solely on these considerations. Employees that currently have a standing desk accommodation are being factored into the layout that will best support safety, design, and the cohesion of the team in the space.

- **Where can I put my plants with the new cubicle layout?**

You should keep any personal items, including plants inside your cubicle workstation. Do not stack plants or other items on file cabinets, in accordance with [Policy No. F&A-1](#).

Doors

Internal doors – employees may find interior doors to hallways, bathrooms, and other areas propped open to minimize high contact touch points on doors. Other doors, such as fire safety doors, have not been propped open in order to maintain fire safety code standards.

Exterior doors – will be posted with COVID safety protocols (i.e. mask requirement) and will remain closed. At headquarters, all doors that have been previously used by employees to enter the building will continue to be accessible. Employees should keep their work ID badge on them at all times to access exterior doors.

- **Does everyone need to enter through the front doors (headquarters)?**

No. Employees can use any of the doors they typically would use to enter the building. If employees are entering through the front lobby doors, they will be required to swipe their work ID badge at the security console. Employees will not have to swipe their work ID badge to exit through the front lobby doors or any other exterior doors at headquarters.

Elevators

Elevator occupancy limits and restrictions have been lifted. Employees are encouraged to not crowd elevators and use a knuckle, closed fist, or elbow to press elevator buttons. Hand sanitizing stations are located outside elevators.

IT / Technology / Equipment

During this telework transition period, employees are reminded to continue to follow all [technical criteria and requirements](#) for using cloud services/accessing DOT internal applications remotely. Employees using their own computer hardware and internet connections are reminded that files should not be downloaded to the users' home computer due to virus risks.

Any user that is bringing in a tablet device needs to bring their docking station to the office with them. A second dock for office use will not be provided. Users who have not been on the DOT network in 90 days (since April 1, 2021) will find that their network account has been disabled due to inactivity. Users should contact the Helpdesk by emailing DOT.Helpdesk@ct.gov or calling (860) 594-3500 for assistance. A wired connection through a docking station will be needed to reactivate the account. WiFi will not work until the account is reactivated. Users should disconnect the network cable from their desktop in the office and use it in the dock. Devices will need to catch up on their updates. This process will take time depending on the number of updates required. The device may reboot many times until the device is up to date.

**** Please be aware that IT expects a high call volume in the first few days and you may find that hold times are longer than normal. Your patience is appreciated.****

- **Does staff need to take home work tablets every night for safety concerns?**
Employees are responsible for the equipment issued to them. It is recommended if you cannot secure your tablet overnight or for any extended period that you take the device with you.

Gift Shop - Headquarters

The gift shop will remain closed until further notice. Employees will be alerted to any reopening details as they become available.

In the meantime, between June 23-July 30 the DOT Apparel - Online Store is open for employees to browse, pay online, and products would be delivered to one of the district offices or the HQ building. To access, click on links and follow the directions

- <https://ct-department-of-transportation.spiritsale.com/>
- <https://swissuniforms.com/shop-your-store/> (scroll down and click CTDOT)
- Enter the following password: CTDOT20216
- Upon checkout you MUST choose one of the following locations for pickup
 - Newington HQ (pickup location 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington)
 - District 1 Rocky Hill (pickup location 1107 Cromwell Ave, Rocky Hill)
 - District 2 Norwich (pickup location 171 Salem Tpke, Norwich)
 - District 3 New Haven (pickup location 140 Pond Lily Ave, New Haven)
 - District 4 Thomaston (pickup location 359 S. Main St, Thomaston)
- Orders will only be available for pickup at one of those locations, no other delivery options are available
- Any questions or concerns with orders should be directed to Swiss Uniforms, Cyndie, 860-870-6572
- Store will open for orders on June 23, 2021 and close July 30, 2021. No orders will be taken after July 30, 2021.

Gym/Fitness Center - Headquarters

The gym remains closed for the time being while the Fitness Center Committee is currently discussing reopening. When the facilities do become available to members, certain protocols will be required including limited capacity, equipment sanitizing, maintaining a sign-in/out log, and physical distancing, until further notice. Masks will be required unless isolated alone.

Hand Sanitizer

Hand sanitizer stations are located in most common areas such as building entry points, lobbies, near elevators, kitchens, and other locations throughout the facilities. Signage is posted to remind people to clean hands before and after using shared equipment, conference rooms, break rooms, and other common areas.

HVAC/Air Ventilation

HVAC systems and their efficiency, filtration, and fresh air intake/volume have been reviewed and evaluated by both CTDOT Facilities and the Department's HVAC contractor. HVAC systems are currently using the highest filtration level possible for each individual HVAC system. Filter exchange frequency is being closely monitored to ensure compliance with the manufacturer's standards to maintain the most efficient air flow. The volume of fresh air intake and the number of fresh air changes has been increased to the highest level possible depending on the HVAC

system capacity and outside weather conditions. If there are specific concerns about a particular air vent that needs attention, please contact Property & Facilities at 860-594-2222 to respond.

- **Will the HVAC Systems and ductwork be cleaned and sanitized regularly to minimize recycling of bad/ contaminated air being continuously moved throughout the building? What will be done to mitigate this issue?**

Routine system maintenance items such as filter changes have been increased and the types of filters being used have been upgraded to the highest level of filtration that the system can handle without restricting air flow or damaging the HVAC system. The cleaning/ sanitization of HVAC duct work as a routine preventive or precautionary measure is not necessary for office environments and typically called for in high risk environments (hospitals, health care facilities, prisons, homeless shelters, etc.)

Lobby – Headquarters

The lobby in Newington headquarters is undergoing upgrades, including new furniture, new table stations for signing papers or brief meetings, the installation of a new security console system, and new digital message boards to greet visitors and staff with timely and relevant information about our work, current safety protocol requirements, and where large meetings or conferences are being held in the building.

- **Do I have to enter headquarters through the lobby/security console now?**
No. Employees can continue to use any door they previously used to access the building. Those who enter through the lobby’s front doors, will need to swipe their work ID badge at the newly installed security console to gain entry, but those employees can exit from any door they choose and are not required to swipe out.

Nurse - Headquarters

The Department’s Nurse is frequently in the field working directly with employees performing Occupational Health assessments. While the Nurse’s schedule may vary, tentative office hours (and/or changes in hours) will be posted outside the Nurse’s Office on a regular basis.

Parking – Headquarters

Employees are reminded to park their vehicles in the designated Employee parking area. Unless authorized for Reserved parking, staff should discontinue use of the Reserved and Visitor parking spaces. At Newington Headquarters, employees will also find two new Electric Vehicle chargers located in the front row on the building’s southside parking area. The Department is working to complete the installation of more than 50 ports or outlets for electric vehicle charging for the agency’s fleet, employees and visitors by the end of the year and is also conducting a feasibility study to expand EV charging to satellite facilities.

- **Will employees have to pay to use the EV charging stations for their personal vehicles? Are there restrictions on its use?**
The Department’s EV chargers are first come first serve and are free for the time being.

Supplies (Disinfecting & PPE)

Masks, Hand Sanitizer, Disinfecting Spray/Wipes

The Department has obtained and maintains a large supply of PPE and sanitizing supplies. The inventory is continually monitored through the Stores system. Employees should NOT be ordering COVID-related supplies independently or maintain/hoard large quantities of COVID supplies, particularly disinfecting materials which expire. All COVID-related supplies must be filtered through Stores. Satellite facilities will continue to order supplies directly from Stores through the CoreCT-Inventory MSR process. At the Newington headquarters, each Bureau has an assigned COVID supply contact to request supplies through Property and Facilities Services – Building Maintenance Office (P&FS). If an employee requires COVID supplies (a mask, disinfecting spray, etc.) they should contact their Bureau’s COVID supply designee:

Engineering & Construction:	Brigitte Bahre	Policy & Planning:	Ericka Weston
Finance & Administration:	Scott Fayer	Public Transportation:	Toni Zanks
Highway Operations:	Andy Morrill	Commissioner’s Office:	Sandy Guerra
		IT:	Alberta Goodwin

Touchless Upgrades

The Department has modernized and installed touchless fixtures in bathrooms and kitchenettes. Touchless upgrades include toilets, urinals, faucets, soap and paper towel dispensers and water fountains. In addition to headquarters and district offices, upgrades are expected to be completed at maintenance and repair facilities by the end of this year.

Vehicles

Employees should practice the following when traveling to and from job sites:

- Avoid having passengers in your vehicle if possible
- If more than one person must be in the same vehicle, both are to wear a face covering at all times
- If possible, use a disinfectant to wipe down high touch points such as door handles, steering wheel, and controls on the dash, among other places.
- **Can I continue to use my personal vehicle instead of a shared or pooled DOT vehicle?**
The use of personal vehicles in lieu of shared DOT vehicles will continue to be permitted until notified otherwise.

Vending Machines / Micro Mart - Headquarters

Last year, when the older vending machines on each floor were removed, a new self-checkout food kiosk or micro-mart with more options was installed in the basement vending area. This well stocked, one-stop shop allows employees to use credit cards or cash 24/7 to get cold and hot beverages, snacks, sandwiches, and other meals on the go.

Virtual Meetings / TEAMS (Microsoft)

DAS has encouraged all agencies to continue to conduct virtual meetings, if possible as a safer alternative to conference rooms.

- **Will meetings continue to be on TEAMS?**

Yes. During the transition period and while telework schedules may stagger with in-person work; employees should continue to use TEAMS as an important communications tool.

- **Virtual meetings/calls generate a lot of background noise, even if you have headphones, and it can be very distracting to others. How are you planning to handle that?**

Whether from a phone call conversation or in a TEAMS meeting, there will always be some level of background noise that should be expected in an office environment. If noise is an issue, employees are encouraged to use office conference rooms and meeting areas to either conduct virtual meetings or isolate from background noise when necessary.

Visitors / Meetings

DAS has instructed agencies to take all reasonable measures to reduce the number of visitors who arrive on-site, including scheduling appointments. Employees are encouraged to continue to conduct virtual meetings if possible as a safer alternative to conference rooms. However, conference rooms are posted with occupancy restrictions and seating has been limited.

All visitors must wear masks in accordance with DOT protocols, regardless of vaccination status. Visitors unable to wear compliant face coverings due to a medical condition will be serviced in the lobby or other area where they can be isolated with appropriate distancing from other individuals.

At headquarters, guests/visitors will need to be checked in with the building's new visitor management system; their picture will be taken, and they will be issued a printed visitor badge while on the premises.

At satellite locations a daily log of employees and visitors is required to be kept at each facility. All visitors or Department employees not assigned to the facility are required to check in with the facility when they arrive and when they leave the facility.

- **Will consultants and others that are regularly at headquarters be issued a temporary long-term badge to avoid checking in daily with security?**

All visitors to the building will be required to check in with security at the present time. This is to control access to the building and for potential contact tracing. Consultants with a yellow non-DOT employee badge must continue to check in with Security when they enter a DOT facility.

Personnel/Human Resources

ADA/Reasonable Accommodation

Under the ADA (Americans with Disability Act), an individual with a disability is any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; (2) has a record of such an impairment; or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. CTDOT will make every reasonable effort to determine and provide the appropriate reasonable accommodation to a qualified individual upon request unless the accommodation would impose an undue burden. The Department, in its discretion, may require the individual to provide additional information about his or her disability or limitations and the need for an accommodation. **If an employee has a medical condition and may need a medical accommodation to telework more than 50% of a pay period, the employee can submit for an accommodation under ADA. Speak with your HR representative. To obtain more information and to request and begin the interactive process, employee's should complete and submit the request form ([ADA Policy and Form](#)).**

FMLA / Family Medical Leave Act

Employees may be eligible to job-protected leave for certain family and medical reasons under FMLA. The federal FMLA, the state FMLA, and the 2017 SEBAC Agreement each allow eligible employees to take "standard" family and medical leave. For example, caregiver Leave allows employees to care for their child, spouse or parent in connection with a serious health condition. Since no two situations are the same, each employee's leave entitlement is assessed on a case-by-case basis. Find more information [here](#) and you can request FMLA through the DAS Benefits and Leave Pod at DAS.BenefitsandLeavesPod4@ct.gov

Child / Family / Elder Care

Many employees were left with few options or assistance during the pandemic to manage both work and family responsibilities. Through telework and flexibility, employees have found ways to meet the demands of work and home as the state continues to recover from COVID. When employees are expected to start transitioning back into the workplace, they should know what options are available to them:

- **Flexible Schedule/Telework:** while telework cannot be used to provide family care, telework and flexible schedules (that are consistent with collective bargaining agreements and business and operational needs) can offer positive outcomes and productivity. Talk to your supervisor about your schedule.
- **FMLA:** standard family and medical leave with a reduced schedule or intermittent leave may be possible for caring for a newborn or sick child, spouse, or parent
- **COVID Leave:** is available for school or daycare closures due to COVID and for providing care for a family member who is sick

- **An employee has a child whose school/camp/day care is closed, and they do not have an alternative means of childcare? Can they bring their child to work?**
No.
- **I care for an immune compromised child/aging parent, can I continue to have telework flexibility?**
While telework cannot be used to provide family care, telework and flexible schedules (which are consistent with bargaining agreements) can be a useful tool for meeting the demands of work, while at home. Discuss your [telework](#) schedule with your supervisor (employees are eligible to telework up to 50% (and possibly 80% during the Telework Transition period) of a biweekly pay period). FMLA may also be an option to consider. Contact your HR representative to discuss further.
- **If I am not ready to send my child to a summer camp this summer, will I have an option to continue teleworking until September, when a new school year will begin?**
While telework cannot be used to provide family care, it does provide greater flexibility for working parents. Under current [OLR/DAS guidance](#), employees are eligible to telework up to 50% (and possibly 80%) of a biweekly pay period between July 1 and September 1. Talk to your supervisor about your telework schedule.

COVID Leave / Paid Leave

Paid leave under 5-248(a) for COVID leave purposes remains available to employees with proper documentation. Under certain circumstances, an employee may have access to a second allotment of paid leave under 5-248(a). General parameters regarding access to and use of paid leave under 5-248(a) for COVID leave purposes include:

- A single allotment of paid leave in the amount of hours that an employee is scheduled during a 14-day calendar period.
- COVID-related reasons for use of leave include personal illness; providing care for a family member who is sick with COVID-19; school or daycare closure due to COVID-19; monitoring of a family member who has confirmed close contact with a COVID positive case.
- Leave may be used intermittently, and in conjunction with telework, where appropriate and authorized.
- A second allotment of paid COVID leave may be available under specific circumstances, including personal COVID-related illness and the employee having been confirmed (through contact tracing) as a confirmed close contact of a COVID positive individual.

The guidance provided in the following grid by OLR & DAS (as of June 11, 2021) addresses specific COVID-19 situations which an employee may encounter:

Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D
EMPLOYEE SHALL NOT PHYSICALLY REPORT TO WORK	EMPLOYEE SHALL NOT PHYSICALLY REPORT TO WORK	EMPLOYEE IS NOT PROHIBITED FROM WORKING	EMPLOYEE IS NOT PROHIBITED FROM WORKING
<p>Employee is actually sick with COVID-19 or COVID-19-like symptoms</p> <p>Employee is caring for sick family with COVID-19 or COVID-19-like symptoms.</p>	<p>Employee has been directed by a medical provider or government official to self-monitor at home due to potential COVID-19 exposure or employee's underlying medical condition.</p>	<p>Employee needs to stay at home to care for children or other dependents as a result of potential COVID-19 exposure and consequently cannot attend school, daycare or eldercare.</p>	<p>Employee who is domiciled with or had contact with a person who has been directed by a medical provider or governmental official to self-monitor at home.</p> <p>Employee had contact with someone who had contact with a person who has been directed by a medical provider or government official to self-monitor at home.</p> <p>Employee who has concerns about exposure through contact with persons in public settings, including the workplace.</p> <p>Employee is medically fragile (per medical documentation on file at the agency) but has had no apparent exposure.</p>
GUIDANCE	GUIDANCE	GUIDANCE	GUIDANCE
<p>Full-time telework for the duration of the COVID illness, if approved by agency AND medically documented.</p>	<p>Telework, if approved by agency.</p>	<p>Telework or flex schedule, if approved by agency.</p>	<p>Report according to most current schedule, incorporating Telework, where authorized.</p>
<p>If telework is not possible, employee will be paid for the scheduled, nonworked hours within a 14 day calendar period under 5-248(a). (If employee teleworks parttime, the 5-248(a) leave will provide wages for the balance of hours scheduled to work.)</p> <p>If the employee's illness or need to care for sick family members continues beyond the 14 calendar days, employee may use earned accruals or choose to go unpaid, provided that sick employees must use their sick leave accruals first. Once the employee has exhausted sick leave accruals, they can use other accruals, take unpaid leave, or apply for additional benefits as provided by state policy or collective bargaining agreement</p>	<p>If telework is not possible, employee will be paid for the scheduled, nonworked hours within a 14 day calendar period under 5-248(a). With proper documentation, an employee may have access to a second allotment of paid leave under 5-248(a).</p> <p>If employee has previously exhausted paid leave under 5248(a), any future self monitoring or quarantine period may be covered by accrued leave (including sick leave), or the employee will be placed on unpaid leave.</p> <p>(If employee teleworks part-time, the 5-248(a) leave will provide wages for the balance of hours scheduled to work.)</p> <p>If a medical provider or government official directs an employee to stay home beyond 14 days, the employee may request leave per standard practice.</p>	<p>If telework is not possible, employee will be paid for the scheduled, nonworked hours within a 14 day calendar period under 5-248(a). (If employee teleworks parttime, the 5-248(a) leave will provide wages for the balance of hours scheduled to work.)</p> <p>If employee's inability to come to work because of COVID-19related disruptions continues beyond the 14 calendar days, the employee may request, per standard practice, to use any earned accruals, including sick leave, or take unpaid leave.</p>	<p>Employee may request to use accruals to take time away from work consistent with standard policies.</p>

- **How is leave time factored in?**

Teleworkers are subject to the same rules of using sick leave, vacation, personal leave, and other leave. If the teleworking employee is unable to work any portion of his/her teleworking day or the day he/she is scheduled to report to their official work location, the employee will be required to use applicable personal leave, earned compensatory time, or accrued vacation or sick leave for the hours not worked, subject to standard Agency rules and procedures regarding such leave. Any change to the approved telework schedule, must be preapproved by the supervisor/manager.

Vaccine Comp Time

Employees may be eligible to receive compensatory time (up to 2 hours) when they have completed the vaccination process on their own time (i.e. outside of work hours/during any period when accrued leave is used (including sick leave) until December 31, 2021. This is not mandatory employees do not have to disclose if he/she has been vaccinated outside of work. However, if an employee wants to receive up to two (2) hours of comp time, they will be required to provide documentation that they have been fully vaccinated to his/her Human Resources Representative.

- **Types of vaccination documentation is acceptable?**

- A completed CDC COVID Vaccination card; or
- A medical document from a health care provider; or
- If neither of the above are available, the employee may present screen shots of appointment confirmation, along with an attestation from the employee that they received the scheduled vaccination(s).

- **How much comp time is an employee entitled to if they receive the single dose vaccination?**

One (1) hour

- **How much comp time is an employee entitled to if they receive the two (2) dose vaccination?**

Two (2) hours.

- **What is the process to receive comp time?**

- Employee submits proof of being fully vaccinated against the COVID 19 virus on their own time (please refer to the attached Q&A documentation for definition) to their Human Resources Representative either by email or in-person.
- Upon receipt of an employee's proof of being vaccinated, Human Resources will contact the Payroll Unit to process the accrued leave transaction as well as file a copy of the proof of documentation in the employee's medical file.
- Payroll will update the employee's leave plan, enter the earned comp code manually, and approve the comp time earned leave code. No coding changes or adjustments for comp time should be made by the employee or field staff; this will be administered by Payroll directly.
- The code of CVCCE will show on your timesheet.

- **When can I use this time and what time code do I use to take for time off?**
Once the payroll has entered and approved the earned comp time leave on the employee's timesheet, the employee will be able to utilize this time. Employees will use the CVCU time leave code. Due to the anticipated volume and the processing of longevity for eligible employees, we are anticipating it may take up to a pay period before the employee sees the leave balance on his/her timesheet.
- **If I previously used accrued leave for my vaccination appointment, do I go back and change my time sheet?**
No, employees cannot substitute this comp time for previously used and approved leave accruals.
- **Can I use COVID leave to get vaccinated?**
No, employees may use his/her own leave accrual (i.e sick leave/sp) for their appointments. Employees should follow their normal protocol for requesting time off.
- **How long do I have to use the earned comp time leave?**
Comp time must be used within twelve months from the date it is credited.

Telework

Telework

As a bargaining item, telework is subject to negotiations between the Office of Labor Relations (OLR) and the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC). While a final Telework Agreement is in the process of being negotiated, the State and SEBAC signed a [Telework Transition Agreement](#) (TTA) on June 17, which governs a “transition period” between **July 1 and September 1** and OLR issued [a clarification memo](#) on June 28. ***Please be advised the provided telework guidance is subject to change as updates are issued by OLR.***

Up to 50%: All employees who have been successfully teleworking during the last 14 months are automatically eligible to continue teleworking 50% of a biweekly period between July 1 and September 1, however employees must 1) register for telework with OLR by submitting the [Telework Transition Request Form](#) (see [directions](#)) and 2) have their telework schedule approved by their supervisor/manager.

More than 50%: Employees may apply for approval to telework more than 50% of a biweekly pay period when consistent with job duties and operational needs. Teleworking requests exceeding 50% per pay period should include an explanation of the special circumstances associated with the request.

Eligibility: applies to employees who have been authorized to telework during the pandemic (regardless if the job title was listed under Appendix A in the Interim Telework Guideline or not). Employees that perform essential functions that cannot be done remotely, will not be eligible for telework.

Application: (issued on June 28 by OLR) every employee that is seeking to continue to telework must register for telework with OLR by submitting the [Telework Transition Request Form](#). Submission does not guarantee approval. Employees will receive notification once a decision has been made on their requested telework schedule. As the Department expects to receive a high volume of applications, which may unintentionally delay approvals/denials, employees should plan on working any previously approved 50% telework schedule discussed with their supervisor that is effective July 1.

Performance: telework can be revoked if the employee is not maintaining an acceptable performance/production.

Flexible schedules: can be provided but must be consistent with collective bargaining agreements as well as business and operational needs.

Telework Reference Library:

- [Telework Transition Agreement](#) – June 2021 ([clarifying memo](#) & [Q&A](#))
- [OLR/DAS guidance for return to the workplace](#) – June 2021
- [COVID-19 Guidance Regarding Telework](#) – March 2020
- [Interim Telework Guidelines](#) (agreement) – May 2019

- **How do I complete the application?**

Employees can find the [Telework Transition Request Form here](#) and are advised to complete the following, which is specific to DOT:

As DOT employees, you need to complete the following:

- **Item #6 Agency Name:** Ensure you select DOT as your agency name.
- **Item #7 Facility:** Ensure you enter your Unit name (i.e. Asset Management, Bridge Safety, Payroll, IT, etc)
- **Item #8 Division:** Ensure you enter/cut and paste the below specific Bureau information as it appears below:

*Commissioner's Office
Engineering and Construction
Finance and Administration
Highway Operations
Policy and Planning
Public Transportation*

- **Item #9 Office/Desk Address (location):** Ensure you enter the town/city of your official work site (i.e. Newington, New Haven, Rocky Hill, etc.)

- **What constitutes an “eligible employee” for telework?**

Employees who have successfully teleworked during that past 14 months.

- **Is the 50% in hours or days in a pay period?**

Days, which can include a half day (i.e. 2.5 workdays per week)

- **Can employees opt to be in-person in the workplace 100% or will they be required to telework 50% of the time?**

Currently, there is no telework requirement. While there are no longer any building occupancy restrictions, DAS has instructed agencies to consider workspace distribution and social distancing as a factor in work schedules. The Department may require telework for situations where workspace is not available. Speak with your supervisor about working 100% in person.

- **How can I get approval for 80% telework instead of up to 50%?**

The Department may authorize telework for more than 50% of the biweekly pay period, but typically, the maximum allowable telework time under the Temporary Telework Agreement is 80% of the biweekly schedule when it is consistent with operational need and due to social distancing requirements that cannot be accommodated in existing work space. Employees must complete the [Telework Transition Request Form](#) and indicate “Greater than 50% telework.” The supervisor will review the request with the employee to understand the situation and circumstances that may warrant more than 50% telework.

- **How does this affect the flex hours that we are working now (anywhere from 6:30 am to 11:00 pm)? Will this continue?**

Flex hours must be consistent with collective bargaining agreements and/or Alternative Work Schedule agreements. Refer to your union contract/AWS agreements.

- **Will certain considerations be made for people with a high compromise illness such as cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure (Hypertension) to work from home (telework) full time?**

Employees can request for an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The link to obtain information on the agency's policy and request form is available on agency's intranet website or by selecting the following link: http://www.ct.gov/dotsi/lib/dotsi/affirmativeaction/ada_policy_02.27.19.pdf. This will request for an accommodation triggers the start of what is known as the "interactive process". For any leave of absences, employees who may request Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and should contact the centralized Benefits and Leaves Unit by selecting the following link: DAS.BenefitsandLeavesPod4@ct.gov. While the FMLA does not provide for telework but rather paid or unpaid leave, for the period of this Telework Transition Agreement an employee may request to telework up to 80% as an "accommodation" for an otherwise FMLA qualifying situation. Contact your HR representative with any questions you may have.

- **Do I need a new designation letter?**

No. OLR has developed a [Telework Transition Request Form](#) for this transition period.

- **Will we need advance notice for intermittent telework days, and will these be restricted?**

OLR has indicated there should be a pre-determined/fixed arrangement for which days the employees are teleworking. Employees should be submitting what their telework arrangement for July 1 through September 1st. If an employee needs to temporarily change their telework days (i.e. one-time change that happens in a single pay period), this can be done with Manager's written approval. If they need to permanently change their telework days, then they should submit a new form and await their Manager's decision.

- **Will telework location be important? Will telework be restricted to one specific location? Or will that be flexible as well?**

A telework location must be approved by your supervisor and consistent with the [Interim Telework Guidelines](#) until additional guidance is provided or updated.

- **Can travel time to a telework location be included in my work hours?**

No. Similar to a commute between home and a work location, which is not considered to be time on the job, travel time to a telework location cannot be included in regular work hours.

- **If telework is working, why make it a requirement to have employees come back in?**

Telework is an important operational tool with many benefits, but it is unlikely to completely replace the type of collaboration that can be fostered among individuals through in-person interactions. As a collective bargaining item, the role and rules affecting telework are currently being negotiated between the State and the unions. While those discussions are ongoing and

the public health emergency is ending, the Governor has called on all state employees to start the transition back into the workplace like other industries.

- **If a job may be performed from home, and the employee has all the equipment needed to telework, may the employee elect to telework instead of using sick time?**

If an employee is not feeling well/not fit to report to the office or workplace, then they are also generally expected to be not well enough to telework. However, if they are already approved to telework and intend to perform full range of duties for a full workday, regardless of how they are feeling—nothing is preventing them from teleworking.

- **If an employee is not asking for any changes or additional telework time, is the form still required?**

The [Telework Transition Request Form](#) is to help track all telework arrangements, and so employees who have pre-COVID telework arrangements should also be entering those arrangement details into the form.

Quick Reference - Telework Transition Agreement (June 17, 2021)

Telework Transition Period

1. This agreement governs the transition period between July 1, 2021, and September 1, 2021, which may be extended by mutual agreement to December 31, 2021, or a final Telework Agreement, whichever occurs first, and covers bargaining units for which the Office of Labor Relations represents the employer.
2. For employees in these units seeking to continue teleworking beyond June 30, 2021, 50% of a biweekly period shall be automatically granted upon request pursuant to this agreement. Such employees can apply for more than 50% when consistent with job duties and operational needs, but typically not to exceed 80%.
 - o If extra time is denied, to those eligible under the interim agreement, immediate facilitation shall be available under the interim agreement standard. This shall include those who were listed under Appendix A, and others such as classifications not included because of timing issues but for which eligibility was not actively disputed (e.g. AAGs).
 - o "Currently" includes people who may have recently ceased teleworking because an agency acted prematurely, in response to the governor's May 13, 2021 email, or because of a temporary emergency need to be working at the job site (once the emergency is over).
 - o The Appointing Authority may require more than 50% telework (even if an employee has requested less) based upon available physical space and requisite social distancing.
 - o Employees demonstrating difficulty maintaining acceptable performance/production levels set by management may be required to return to the workplace. Performance/production issues resulting in a revocation of telework shall be subject to review under the grievance procedure of the applicable collective bargaining agreement.
3. Employers shall continue to provide flexible scheduling for members consistent with business and operational needs. Core hours may be established by the Appointing Authority when employees must be available as long as it is not inconsistent with CBAs, where applicable.
4. Appendices -- Except as otherwise provided herein, The above applies regardless of whether or not on Appendix A, except for employees excluded from telework as Hazardous Duty.
5. The employer will provide ongoing workplace safety information to the unions upon request. The percentage of staff in the workplace will never exceed safe limits pursuant to DPH/CDC guidance.
6. Employees who are COVID-fragile, with doctor's note, will be accepted as a reason for maintaining current telework. Those asserting risk to COVID-fragile family member at home are included. The parties shall use standards from ADA for Employee and from FMLA for Family Members.
7. The Google form attached hereto shall be used to request telework during the transition period, which shall be revised to include the ability to ask for as much time as wanted. During this transition, the parties will develop a more abbreviated application/process to replace the one in the interim telework agreement. To the extent that there are competing requests over a particular telework schedule on the Google form, they will be resolved on the basis of state

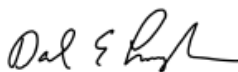
service seniority. Pending response by the employer to an employee's request, they may continue with their current schedule of reporting to the work site.



Sandra Fae Brown-Brewton
Undersecretary for Labor Relations

6/17/21

Date:



Daniel E. Livingston, Chief Negotiator
State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition

6.16.21

Date:



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF LABOR RELATIONS

June 28, 2021

TO: Labor Relations Designees

RE: Clarification of the Transition Telework Agreement

The extensive use of telework was prompted by the sudden onset of a public health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Connecticut has largely contained the spread of this virus, with case rates and hospitalizations at their lowest points since the pandemic began and the among the highest percentage of the eligible population fully vaccinated in the nation. The magnitude of risk that required extensive teleworking has been significantly reduced.

The intent of the recent agreement between parties is to transition the workforce safely back into office settings if they are working off site due to the pandemic, while recognizing the agencies' operational needs and the parties' contractual commitment to telework and its positive aspects for the state, state services, and state employees. It is understood that 76% of eligible residents have received a vaccine and about 24% have not. It is furthermore understood that the vaccine is widely available to the eligible population and has been for months. Those who have received the vaccine have a lower risk of exposure - albeit lower, some risk remains present. We acknowledge that this situation can change or improve quickly and may require adjustments and a corresponding proportionate response. The Transition Agreement applies to those persons who have successfully teleworked during that past 14 months. It does not apply to those who have been given alternate assignments. It does not apply to those who have had a steady in-office presence prior to the Governor's May 13th announcement, including those in front-facing customer service operations. It does not apply to those in hazardous duty covered positions.

It is understood that employees are present to serve the public either directly or indirectly. If their physical presence is needed on site, they can be directed to report to the office, with reasonable notice, as long as a safe working environment can be provided there. It is understood that between the time employees are physically present and when they are teleworking, they must be able to execute

100% of their job duties and responsibilities (not counting any adjustments that may have been made in such duties as a reasonable accommodation resulting from the ADA interactive process).

The Agreement is clear that anyone who requests to telework more than 50% of the biweekly pay period will only be granted such if the request is consistent with the work the employee performs and meets the Agency's operational needs. Such decision is at the Agency Head or, if delegated, at supervising manager's discretion. The vast majority of State agencies are returning to an at minimum 50% telework schedule effective July of 2021. For employees who were in classifications eligible to apply for telework, under the interim telework agreement, denials of said requests for up to 80% telework are subject to facilitation consistent with the interim telework agreement standard.

The agreement allows for the granting of telework greater than 50% and was intended to address such unique circumstances at the discretion of the agency head that require a higher level of teleworking including but not limited to inadequate social distancing space for agency's that have temporarily increased staffing for pandemic programmatic responses (i.e. Department of Housing and Department of Labor).

Other unique factors can be considered in the granting of an employees' request to continue teleworking at greater than 50%. For example, the employee may need to provide support to an ill or infirm family member, and the Agency may need that employee to continue to work. Granting an employees' request to continue teleworking at greater than 50%, in such situations, may be in the interests of the employer and the employee rather than mandating the employee use sick leave and not work. The agreement supports honoring the employee's request for greater than 50% but less than 80% in such unique situations.

It is understood that not every employee wants to telework, and not every job is conducive to teleworking and such determinations are at the discretion of the Agency Head. It is also understood that in some situations the employer may need employees to telework more or less than they have requested. Some Agencies, because of office space availability, social distancing, office reconfiguration and design, may need to have employees teleworking more frequently. Management may, subject to operational need, require employees to telework or work onsite more or less based on operational needs.

Please feel free to share this Notice with your Agency Heads. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Labor Relations via email to

Tammy.Kowalski@ct.gov. Employees with questions should contact their Agency Personnel Office.

S. Fae Brown-Brewton
Sandra Fae Brown-Brewton
Undersecretary for Labor Relations

Q&A Guidance for Implementing and Administering the TTA

1. **Q:** What Bargaining Units are covered by the Transition Telework Agreement (TTA)?

A: The 17 state employee Bargaining Units serviced by the Office of Labor Relations (OLR).

2. **Q:** How long is the TTA in effect?

A: Two months from July 1, 2021 to September 1, 2021. If the parties finalize the “Interim Telework Guidelines” prior to September 1, 2021, those guidelines will replace the TTA.

3. **Q:** What employees are covered by the TTA?

A: The Transition Agreement applies to those employees who have successfully teleworked during that past 14 months. This includes employees who consistently and steadily participated in some level of telework prior to May 13, 2021 in response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

It does not apply to those who were given alternate assignments to get through the pandemic. It does not apply to those who have had a steady in-office presence prior to the Governor’s May 13th announcement, including those in front-facing customer service operations. It does not apply to those in hazardous duty covered positions. Agencies are not obligated under the TTA to afford telework to new employees hired after June 17, 2021; that said, an agency is not precluded from granting telework schedules to new employees for the period specifically covered by the TTA.

4. **Q:** The TTA provides that based upon operational need employees can automatically be granted a 50% telework schedule. What if this does not meet operational need?

A: Then the schedule should be adjusted consistent with the Agency's operational need. The operational need cannot simply be based upon a distrust about whether employees are really working. That is a performance issue and it should be addressed as such.

5. **Q:** Can employees request to telework more than 50% of the biweekly pay period?

A: Agency heads may authorize telework for more than 50% of the biweekly pay period, but typically, the maximum allowable telework time under the TTA is 80% of the biweekly schedule when it is consistent with operational need and due to social distancing requirements that cannot be accommodated in existing work space.

6. **Q:** If employees' productivity has improved while teleworking, and we want to keep that momentum going, can we allow employees to telework 100% of the time?

A: That option is not sanctioned by the TTA, but such things as available space may require other measures. Employees can be granted telework for greater than 50% of the biweekly pay period, under specific personal circumstances. For example, the employee may need to provide support to an ill or infirm family member, and the Agency may need that employee to continue to work through the ongoing pandemic period. Granting an employee's request to continue teleworking at greater than 50%, in such situations, may be in the interests of the employer and the employee rather than mandating the employee use sick leave and not work. Such a temporary arrangement would be within the discretion of the Agency Head and must be consistent with job duties, productivity and operational need.

7. **Q:** What happens if I deny an employee's request to telework more than 50% of the biweekly pay period?

A: If the employee's position was among those approved to telework pursuant to the interim telework guidelines, the employee can seek facilitation under that agreement. Those would include the classifications set forth in Appendix A and some others that have recently accreted into bargaining units.

8. **Q:** Can I deny a request if an employee demonstrates difficulty in maintaining an acceptable level of performance?

A: An approved request can be revoked, and a new request can be denied for that reason. The employee can be directed to return to an in-office presence but may challenge the revocation/denial under the applicable contract grievance procedure. If telework is revoked, the agency should ensure adequate in-office supervisory presence.

It is understood that between the time employees are physically present and when they are teleworking, they must be able to execute 100% of their job duties and responsibilities (not counting any adjustments that may have been made in such duties as a reasonable accommodation resulting from the ADA interactive process).

9. **Q:** What is meant by “COVID-fragile?”

A: This is labor-relations parlance intended to capture the universe of those “at increased risk” (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html>). “COVID fragile” conditions include comorbidities that can render people more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19 or have a severe/adverse reaction to the vaccine. They include, but are not limited to: cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung diseases, including COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), asthma (moderate-to-severe), interstitial lung disease, cystic fibrosis, pulmonary hypertension, heart conditions (such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies or hypertension), HIV infection, immunocompromised state (weakened immune system), sickle cell disease or thalassemia, solid organ or blood stem cell transplant, etc.

Employees who are claiming a COVID-fragile status but not seeking to telework may, of course, avail themselves of the ADA interactive process or seek FMLA in the case of a qualifying reason. In some cases, telework may be considered a reasonable accommodation under the ADA.

While the FMLA does not provide for telework, but rather paid or unpaid leave, the Agency Head may grant such an “accommodation” for an otherwise FMLA qualifying situation as described in #6 above, for the period covered by the TTA.

10. **Q:** Are children under 12 that cannot be vaccinated at this time considered “Covid Fragile”?

A: No unless they fall under the description above.

11. **Q:** What is required of the employee if they are claiming to have a “Covid-Fragile” person in their home? The rules state a doctor’s note for the employee, but nothing is noted about a family member.

A: The employee will need to follow the Family Medical Leave process for family members or caregiver leave. Human Resources will review the process individually with each Employee.

12. **Q:** Will we be given the procedures for both situations (forms that need to be filled out etc.) when an employee/family member is “Covid Fragile”?

A: Yes, Human Resources (HR) will help facilitate the ADA Process (for individuals) and both Human Resources and the Benefits and Leaves Pod will help facilitate the Family Medical Leave Process (for family members or caregiver leave). The forms will be given directly to the Employee from Human Resources. Human Resources will then review the process individually with each Employee.

13. **Q:** Should all “COVID fragile” questions and claims be directed to HR? If not, will HR be giving us guidance on what COVID fragile means and how to respond?

A: Yes, please direct employees to Human Resources as they have been directly engaged with OLR and can obtain guidance as needed.

14. **Q:** We were planning on changing all field staff’s duty stations to the office until we resume on site exams in the fall. Do you agree this is still the best course of action?

A: This is not advised. Due to the myriad of arrangements made during the COVID 19 upsurge and this transitional agreement, it is best to leave duty

stations as they are currently. If you feel that operational needs dictate otherwise, then a further discussion can be had.

15. **Q:** The union communication states agencies should remain flexible around scheduling. Can we ask employees to submit their telework days at the beginning of a pay period? Can we ask employees to submit telework days at the beginning of a longer period of time (beginning of month)?

A: There should be a pre-determined/fixed arrangement for which days the employees are teleworking. Employees should be submitting what their telework arrangement is moving forward through September 1st. If they need to temporarily change their telework days (i.e. one-time change that happens in a single pay period), this can be done with Manager's written approval. If they need to permanently change their telework days, then they should submit a new form and await their Manager's decision.

16. **Q:** Will telework now replace state closings during bad weather? If so, would that day still be included in the employee's telework hours allotment?

A: This will be covered in the final telework agreement that will be reached between SEBAC and OLR. There is no additional information currently.

17. **Q:** Does vacation time, sick time or personal leave (PL) reduce the number of hours an employee can telework in a pay period?

A: Vacation, sick time, or PL does not change the telework schedule – it remains as is. If an employee uses vacation, sick time, or PL on a day they are supposed to be in the office, they will continue with their regular schedule and not have to make up time.

The same goes for if an employee uses vacation, sick time, or PL on a day they are supposed to be teleworking, they will continue with their regular schedule and not have to make up time.

If an employee is scheduled to telework and is requesting to use vacation, sick time, or PL they would use leave accruals to cover their time as prescribed by the applicable Attendance Policy.

18. **Q:** “Field” examiners have their duty station designated as their home. Although they would not be teleworking more than 80% (or even 50%) when we resume onsite examinations, does it make sense to change their designation to “office” in order to avoid paying them mileage and commuting time to go to the office or does it make sense to leave their status as is and allow them to remain at 100% telework during this short period of time?

A: Changing their status may be viewed as retaliatory. Our recommendation would be to leave the status as is. Remember, “Field Employee” designation with a “home office” is a separate and distinct concept from telework. But further discussions can be had if operational needs dictate otherwise.

19. **Q:** Is there going to be a telework request form that is discussed in the Union communication (google form)? If yes when will it be available for use?

A: This form will be sent out to Agencies by COB Monday, June 28th.

20. **Q:** If an employee is not asking for any changes or additional telework time, is the form still required?

A: The form is to help track all telework arrangements, and so employees who have pre-COVID telework arrangements should also be entering those arrangement details into the form.

21. **Q:** Can we require CCT’s (Connecticut Career Trainees) to come into the office more than 50% of their pay period if it is required for training?

A: Yes, if the training cannot be completed within the 50% time in the office and if Agency operating needs dictates the training is required.

22. **Q:** Can a teleworking employee’s supervisor ask employees to provide evidence of the work performed?

A: Just as the employer may request such documentation of an employee on site, the same can be requested of teleworking employees.

23. **Q:** If employees are scheduled to telework, but are subsequently needed to report to the office, can they be asked to report?

A: Yes, with reasonable notice employees can be advised that they need to report to the office.

24. **Q:** We have allowed people to use Alternative Work Schedules (AWS) while teleworking during the pandemic. Can we still do that even if we approve 80% telework?

A: Yes, as long as it is consistent with the core hours you have in your Agency's AWS program.

25. **Q:** We believe that employees may opt to retire rather than come back to the office 50% of the bi-weekly schedule. Is maintaining the current work force an operational need?

A: Department Heads are in the best position to determine what their operational needs are, and employees must decide for themselves about when they choose to retire.

26. **Q:** How do we handle the grievances that will be coming to Agencies as a result of denying requests?

A: The TTA provides for Facilitation, but you are encouraged to resolve the issue at your level if possible.

27. **Q:** What should Agencies do with the Level Designations during the Transition Agreement?

A: The transition to on-site work may mean changes to employee level designation status. OPM will be requesting that Agencies prepare and submit updated Level Designation Spreadsheets in the coming weeks. Agencies will be asked to reflect the status of employees as of July 1, 2021. Spreadsheets will not need to be submitted in advance of July 1 – instructions will be sent under separate cover, along with timeframes for preparation and submission. We ask that agencies focus first on the telework project per the TTA.

28. **Q:** Our Agency is concerned that we will deny telework to a group of bargaining unit employees and another agency may approve a request for the same schedule. Should we be concerned about that?

A: No, each Agency will make decisions based upon its unique operational need.

29. **Q:** What is happening from 7/1/21 to 9/1/21 towards a permanent agreement?

A: Prior to the pandemic, the parties were engaged in negotiations to finalize the interim telework guidelines. Those discussions will continue. If no final Agreement is reached by 9/1/21, then we will revert to the interim guidelines. This assumes that there is no dramatic upsurge in COVID 19 infections.