

GPO Guidance on Medical Assistance, Telework and Leave Flexibilities in Response to Coronavirus (Update on March 23, 2020)

Situation

In light of the evolving situation concerning the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), including the World Health Organization declaration of a pandemic, the Director has activated Stage 4 of the Pandemic Coronavirus Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). GPO has taken this step to assertively safeguard the health and safety of our workforce and maintain the capability to continue mission critical support. A major step in implementing Stage 4 is segregating employees who perform critical functions and practicing social distancing to safeguard employees and work functions. As a result, the Director has issued the following guidance.

- Emergency designated employees are required to come to work to continue to carry out the critical services we provide to Congress, the White House and Federal agencies;
- Employees who are required to come to GPO buildings will experience changes to the way work is accomplished. These changes will be implemented to maximize social distancing and protect all of us and our capabilities;
- Due to the additional risk, it recommended that ***employees 70 years or older DO NOT to come into the buildings***. Employees in this category should talk to their supervisor about next steps;
- Telework-capable employees will continue or begin to telework;
- Employees who are not telework-capable, designated as an emergency employee, or otherwise able to work will be placed on weather and safety leave; and
- All business travel is canceled effective immediately, unless it is critical to the agency's mission and approved by the Director.
- Security will screen all employees and visitors as they enter the buildings. Visitors found to have flu-like symptoms will not be allowed access to the building. Employees found to have flu-like symptoms will be escorted to the Medical Clinic for screening. Affected staff should inform their supervisor of their absence.

I. Medical Assistance

First and foremost, employee health and safety is our priority. If an employee believes that they have COVID-19 symptoms they should not come to work and should immediately contact their health care provider and supervisor. It is recommended that employees contact GPO Medical for advice and guidance. Medical will work closely with the employee, and the supervisor to ensure that recovery and return to work is a smooth process. During this emergency Medical has established a telemedicine line at 202-512-2061.

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II. Notification of COVID-19

Due to the significant health risk of exposure to COVID-19, employees recovering from the virus or those experiencing any Coronavirus symptoms must contact the GPO Medical Clinic to be cleared to return to work. Additionally, asymptomatic employees subject to movement restrictions (quarantine or isolation) under the direction of public health authorities must notify their supervisor and the GPO Medical Clinic at 202-512-2061 to be cleared to return to work.

III. Telework Capable-Employees

Per [GPO Directive 645.19B](#), during COOP situations the agency has the authority to place employees in telework capable positions (for guidance see [GPO Directive 645.19B, para.7.b](#)) on telework. Therefore, all Business Units shall maximize their telework capability by ensuring that employees in positions that are telework-capable are placed on telework to maintain mission capabilities and readiness. This instruction supersedes any Business Unit telework policy or individual telework agreement.

Supervisors and managers should ensure that there are effective processes in place for communicating efficiently with employees who are teleworking. For additional information please see <https://www.telework.gov/>.

Supervisors should contact the Human Capital Policy Division at 202-512-1182 for additional advice or clarification.

IV. Telework Flexibilities During COVID-19 Pandemic

During this pandemic health crisis, the agency will allow telework employees flexibilities to provide care for their children that are at home because of daycare or school closures; or for other family members requiring care and supervision. With the approval of their supervisor, employees experiencing these circumstances may modify their tour of duty if they will still be able to effectively contribute to the agency's mission and meet customer needs. Under this exception policy, the employee is expected to account for work and non-work hours during his or her tour of duty and take appropriate leave (paid or unpaid) to account for time spent away for normal work-related duties.

For an employee covered by a telework agreement, ad-hoc telework arrangements can be used as an alternative to the use of sick leave for exposure to a quarantinable communicable disease for an employee who is asymptomatic (i.e., healthy, not displaying symptoms of the given disease) or caring for a family member who is asymptomatic. An employee's request to telework from home while responsible for such a family member may be approved for the length of time the employee is free from care duties and has work to perform to effectively contribute to the agency's mission.

Supervisors are authorized to allow employees to utilize up to 20 hours of weather and safety leave per pay period if they are prevented from teleworking from a home duty station due to:

- School or daycare closures resulting in a lapse in childcare, which requires them to provide care to help prevent exposure/spread of COVID 19.

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- Other reasons they identify related to COVID-19 such as providing care for another family member in order to help prevent exposure/spread of COVID 19, taking any required sanitation measures, etc.

An employee must always have a sufficient amount of work to perform throughout the workday when he or she teleworks. An employee performing telework who does not have enough work must notify his or her supervisor of this situation. If the supervisor does not have work to assign to a telework capable employee, the supervisor may approve weather and safety leave to that employee for the affected hours.

Other than the flexibilities outlined in this memo GPO's leave policies and procedures outlined in [GPO Directive 645.13A GPO Leave Regulations](#) apply.

V. Emergency and Non-Emergency Employees

Employees that are not in telework-capable positions have been designated as emergency or non-emergency employees by their Business Unit Manager. During emergency situations, the GPO has the authority to change employees' status to emergency or non-emergency as the mission dictates. During this crisis, emergency and non-emergency personnel must check the GPO Status Hotline at 202-512-1810 each day before their shift starts to determine their status and if they are to report to work. Supervisors are also responsible to notify employees when their status changes.

Personnel designated as non-emergency will be placed on Weather and Safety Leave during this emergency.

VI. Leave Without Pay (LWOP)

If an employee is on leave without pay (LWOP) pending disability retirement, on workers' compensation, on suspension, or in a non-pay status on the workdays both before and after the agency moved into this emergency posture they are not entitled to weather and safety leave and will remain in their current leave status.

VII. Alternate Work Schedules (AWS)

Compressed Work Schedule (CWS): During this emergency, supervisors have the authority to temporarily withdraw or modify an employee's CWS in order to deal with workload or staffing needs without the normal 5 days advance notice.

Gliding Work Schedule (GWS): To encourage social distancing during this emergency, supervisors have the authority and are encouraged to expand the band hours to allow employees to vary their times of arrival to and departure from the work site.

VIII. Leave Flexibilities

Current agency policy allows for leave flexibilities. Employees should discuss their leave situation with their supervisor to determine what flexibilities may be available to cover their specific situation. To review current agency leave policy, click [here](#), and scroll down to Leave.

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Use of weather and safety leave is covered in [GPO Directive 645.1D](#) Closure, Delayed Arrival, and Early Dismissal Policy for Inclement Weather Conditions and Similar Emergency Situations. This will be the guiding policy while the agency is in Stage 4 of GPO's Pandemic Coronavirus COOP.

Weather and safety leave may be granted when an asymptomatic employee is subject to movement restrictions (quarantine or isolation) under the direction of public health authorities due to a significant risk of exposure to COVID-19. This determination will be made by the GPO Medical Officer based on the significant safety risks for other employees and the general public that would be incurred if such an employee were allowed to travel to and perform work at the employee's normal worksite. Use of weather and safety leave would supersede the use of sick leave as would have otherwise been allowed in these circumstances under 5 CFR § 630.401(a)(5). However, a telework employee would generally be expected to perform telework at home as long as the employee is asymptomatic. (See 5 CFR § 630.1605.) In these circumstances, if a telework program participant needs time off for personal reasons, then the employee would be expected to take other personal leave or paid time off (e.g., annual leave or sick leave to care for a family member). If an employee (whether or not a telework program participant) is diagnosed as being infected, or likely has been infected, with COVID-19, the use of weather and safety leave would be inappropriate. Accrued or advanced sick leave would normally be used to cover such a period of sickness, as provided in 5 CFR § 630.401(a)(2). Agencies must grant sick leave when an illness prevents an employee from performing work. If the employee exhausts the available sick leave, other paid leave or paid time off may also be available to an employee, as described in this guidance document.

IX. Additional Information

As this is a rapidly evolving situation, GPO will continue to update information and inform managers and employees regarding the potential impacts of and available responses to COVID-19.

You may contact the Office of Human Capital at 202-512-1182 with additional questions or clarifications. For medical questions or clarification you should consult the agency Medical Officer at 202-512-2061

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