COVID-19 Employment/Leave/Pay Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ is intended to provide general guidance for probationary, permanent, classified, and certificated employees. Guidance may change based on individual circumstances or other advisement.

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SITE CLOSURES
What is my pay status if my worksite is closed in response to COVID-19?
What if I need to stay home with my own children due to school closures (not illness)?

HIGH-RISK GROUPS
What if I am an employee who is age 65 years or older?
What if I am in a high-risk group as a result of a medical condition?
What if I am pregnant?

QUARANTINES
What is my pay status if I am placed under an official quarantine?
What is my pay status if I am self-quarantined due to exposure to an individual with coronavirus?
What is my pay status if I am self-quarantined due to travel outside of Trinity County to an area identified as having widespread community transmission?

EMPLOYEE ILLNESS
What should I do if I am experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19 (fever, cough, and shortness of breath)?
What is the appropriate course of action if an employee at work has visible symptoms of illness?
What is an employee’s pay status after being sent home due to visible signs of illness?
When can an employee who has been ill return to work?

CARE FOR AN ILL INDIVIDUAL
What if I need to care for an ill or quarantined individual?

REMOTE WORK
What is TCOE’s expectation about employees working remotely from home?
ESSENTIAL WORKERS
What does it mean when I am identified as an essential worker?

DISASTER SERVICE WORKERS
I remember signing the Oath of Office when I was hired and I am wondering what that means given the COVID-19 situation?

OTHER BENEFITS
What is the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act?
Can I get paid leave under the new Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act?
Are employees who lose pay as a result of COVID-19 eligible for unemployment benefits?
Are employees who lose pay as a result of COVID-19 eligible for Paid Family Leave Benefits through the California Employment Development Department?

SITE CLOSURES
Q. What is my pay status if my worksite is closed in response to COVID-19?

A. During any closure of a Trinity County School facility and/or curtailment of any operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees will not suffer any loss of pay or benefits relative to their regular schedule and assignment for the period of closure or curtailment so long as they are ready and available to work during regularly assigned work hours.

During a closure, employees must be reachable at all times during their regular work hours, abstain from alcohol and other substances, and be available to report to work within one hour of notification to perform assigned duties as needed, whether on site, remote, or a combination thereof. During a closure, pre-approved vacation (classified), off contract (certificated and management), and sick leave shall continue to be used as originally planned, and the employee will not be expected to be available or on-call to work during those leaves. The employee may request to amend pre-approved sick leave under extenuating circumstances such as the cancellation of a surgery or medical appointment.

Q. What if I need to stay home with my own children due to school closures (not illness)?

A. Employees in this circumstance may be eligible for a new type of protected leave effective April 1, 2020. An employee may receive up to 12 workweeks of leave paid at 2/3 the employee’s regular pay rate for up to $200 daily and $12,000 total in aggregate. The employee may also use other eligible paid leave such as personal necessity (up to 8 hours per month), personal compelling, compensatory time, or vacation (classified) to supplement the 2/3 paid leave. If the employee needs additional leave after the new paid leave has exhausted, the employee may use personal necessity, personal compelling, vacation (classified only), and/or compensatory time as available, consistent with leaves policy. Prior use of leave during the past 12 calendar months that qualified under the Family and
Medical Leave Act will limit the total workweeks of employee eligibility for this new paid leave.

**HIGH-RISK GROUPS**

**Q. What if I am an employee who is age 65 years or older?**

**A.** On March 15, 2020, Governor Newsom advised that all employees in this age group home-isolate. As of March 16, 2020 all school employees age 65 and older will continue to receive full pay for the duration of the period they are restricted from on-site work. These employees shall be on-call and ready for remote work during work hours and may be called upon for essential work (remotely) if needed and the employee is medically able.

**Q. What if I am in a high-risk group as a result of a medical condition?**

**A.** We encourage employees who have medical conditions that put them at high risk to reach out to their health care provider and to maintain communication with their supervisor and Human Resources. An employee who has been advised to self-quarantine by a health care provider may be eligible for up to two workweeks of emergency paid sick leave at the employee’s full pay rate; this emergency paid sick leave is separate from the employee’s personal district leave balances and may be used prior to use of any personal leaves. If the employee needs additional leave after the emergency paid sick leave has been exhausted, the employee will use available paid leaves including sick leave, vacation (classified only), compensatory time, and/or other entitlement/differential pay, consistent with leaves policy. A note from a medical professional may be required to verify the need for preventive self-quarantine if the employee requests emergency family and medical leave and/or emergency sick leave and/or plans to use leaves other than vacation or compensatory time.

**Q. What if I am pregnant?**

**A.** According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Trinity County Public Health Department (TCPHD), pregnancy alone has not been identified as a high-risk medical condition. Based on current guidance from CDC related to pregnancy and COVID-19, the medical community is still learning about the risks to pregnancy. Pregnant school employees are advised to consult with their health care provider.

**QUARANTINES**

**Q. What is my pay status if I am placed under an official quarantine?**

**A.** In the event an employee is placed under an official quarantine issued by the Trinity County Public Health Department or other governmental authority, the employee shall continue to receive full pay for the duration of the official quarantine and will not use personal leaves.
Q. What is my pay status if I am self-quarantined due to exposure to an individual with coronavirus?

A. An employee who believes they have been exposed to an individual who has tested positive for coronavirus shall inform their district Supervisor or Superintendent promptly and self-quarantine for 14 calendar days to self-monitor for any potential symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. During this self-quarantine, employees will use all available paid leaves including sick leave, vacation (classified only), compensatory time, and/or other entitlement/differential pay as available, consistent with leaves policy. The employee may be eligible for up to two workweeks of emergency paid sick leave at their full pay rate if a healthcare provider advises the employee to self-quarantine or if the employee is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while seeking a medical diagnosis. A note from a medical professional may be required if the employee requests emergency paid sick leave and/or plans to use leaves other than vacation (classified only) or compensatory time.

Q. What is my pay status if I am self-quarantined due to travel outside of Trinity County to an area identified by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or California Department of Public Health (CDPH) as having widespread community transmission?

A. An employee who travels to an area identified by the CDC or CDPH as having widespread community transmission shall inform their district and upon return, self-quarantine for 14 calendar days to self-monitor for any potential symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. During the post-travel self-quarantine period, employees will use all available paid leaves including sick leave, vacation (classified only), compensatory time, and/or other entitlement/differential pay as available, consistent with leaves policy. The employee may be eligible for up to two workweeks of emergency paid sick leave at their full pay rate if a health care provider advises them to self-quarantine or if they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while seeking a medical diagnosis. A note from a medical professional may be required if the employee requests emergency paid sick leave and/or plans to use leaves other than vacation (classified only) or compensatory time.

EMPLOYEE ILLNESS

Q. What should I do if I am experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19 (fever, cough, and shortness of breath)?

A. Employees should utilize established call-in procedures and — if currently assigned to work at a site — stay home if they have any of these symptoms. Public Health advises individuals experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 to contact their health care provider. Employees may use sick leave, vacation (classified only), compensatory time, and/or other entitlement/differential pay as available, consistent with leaves policy. Employees may also be eligible for up to two workweeks of emergency paid sick leave at their full pay rate prior to use of personal leaves if a health care provider advises them to self-quarantine or if they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while seeking a medical diagnosis. A
note from a medical professional may be required if the employee requests emergency paid sick leave and/or plans to use leaves other than vacation (classified only) or compensatory time.

Q. What is the appropriate course of action if an employee at work has visible symptoms of illness?

A. The employee’s supervisor should ask the ill employee to go home. As a public employer, we are required to maintain safe and healthy working conditions for employees and use reasonable care in order to provide for the safety of other employees and students by furnishing a safe work and learning environment. If a co-worker has concerns about another employee’s symptoms, they should report their concerns to their own supervisor and/or the other employee’s supervisor so the supervisor(s) can take appropriate action. Employees may return to work when they have been asymptomatic for 72 hours and/or if they have provided documentation of medical clearance to return to work.

Q. What is an employee’s pay status after being sent home due to visible signs of illness?

A. An employee sent home from work due to visible signs of illness shall remain home until asymptomatic for at least 72 hours. The employee may be eligible for up to two workweeks of emergency paid sick leave at the employee’s full pay rate; this emergency paid sick leave is separate from the employee’s district leave balances and may be used before any personal leaves. If the employee needs additional leave after the emergency paid sick leave has exhausted, the employee will use their paid sick leave, and upon exhaustion, other entitlement/differential pay leave during the absence. An employee may choose to use paid vacation (classified only) and/or compensatory time if available, prior to other entitlement/differential pay. After exhaustion of all sick leave benefits, an employee will be required to use vacation (classified only) and/or compensatory time as available, consistent with leaves policy.

Q. When can an employee who has been ill return to work?

A. An employee who has been off work due to illness with the type of symptoms associated with COVID-19 (fever, cough, and shortness of breath) may return to work once they have been completely asymptomatic for at least 72 hours or they have a release from a health care provider to return to work. This requirement is in accordance with guidance from local public health authorities and applies whether or not the employee has been confirmed to have COVID-19.

CARE FOR AN ILL INDIVIDUAL

Q. What if I need to care for an ill or quarantined individual?
A. Employees in this circumstance may be eligible for up to two workweeks of emergency paid sick leave at 2/3 their regular rate of pay; this emergency paid sick leave is separate from the employee’s district paid leave balances and may be used prior to any personal leaves. The employee may supplement the 2/3 pay rate with other available paid leaves such as personal necessity, vacation (classified only), or compensatory time. If the employee needs additional leave after the emergency paid sick leave has been exhausted, the employee may use any remaining eligible paid leaves. If the individual for whom the employee is caring is diagnosed with COVID-19, the employee will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days.

REMOTE WORK
Q. What is my district’s expectation about employees working onsite, or remotely/from home?

A. On March 19, 2020, Governor Newsom issued a stay-at-home order for all Californians; during this time, although closed to the public, we are still operational and must maintain essential services. Employees who are in positions identified as essential to the continuation of critical operations will report to work on-site, work remotely, or a combination thereof as authorized by supervisors. All employees not working in person are considered on-call, working remotely, and in paid status. Supervisors will make individual arrangements and assignments for remote work, which may include assigned professional development.

ESSENTIAL WORKERS
Q. What does it mean when I am identified as an essential worker?

A. Employees in positions that are identified as essential for the continuation of critical operations will be required to work remotely, on-site, or a combination thereof during a closure or curtailment.

DISASTER SERVICE WORKERS
Q. I remember signing the Oath of Office when I was hired, and I am wondering what that means given the COVID-19 situation?

A. Pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act, any person employed by a county, city, state agency, or public district in California is a public employee and therefore considered a Disaster Service Worker. This means that in the event of an emergency, you may be called upon to aid in the response and recovery phases of a disaster or emergency, including approved and documented training necessary or proper to engage in such activities. As a Disaster Service Worker, you may be asked to carry on with your work as usual, or you may be asked to do something different from your everyday job.
OTHER BENEFITS

Q. What is the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act?

A. Employees who have been employed for at least 30 calendar days and are unable to work on-site or remotely due to childcare issues (for children under age 18) as a result of the closure of school or place of care (or unavailability of childcare provider) may be entitled to up to 10 workweeks of paid leave for childcare purposes at a rate of 2/3 their regular rate (maximum $200/day and $10,000 total) during the current state of emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic. When employee is qualified to take leave for childcare purposes, the employee is entitled to utilize a total of 12 workweeks of leave. For the first two weeks of leave under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act, the employee may be eligible to use emergency paid sick leave, also paid at 2/3 their regular rate (maximum $200/day and $10,000 total).

Q. Can I get paid leave under the new Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act?

A. Under the new legislation, employees may be eligible for up to two workweeks of emergency paid sick leave; this emergency paid sick leave is separate from the employee's personal leave balances and may be used prior to any personal leaves. Circumstances that may be eligible for emergency paid sick leave (at the pay rates specified) include the inability to work on site or remotely due to any of the reasons listed below.

FULL PAY (maximum $511/day and $5,110 aggregate):
1. The employee is subject to a quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19 by federal, state, or local government; or
2. The employee has been advised to self-quarantine related to COVID-19 by a health care provider; or
3. The employee is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking medical diagnosis; or

2/3 PAY (maximum $200/day and $2,000 aggregate):
4. The employee is caring for an individual who is subject to (1) or (2) above; or
5. The employee is caring for a son or daughter whose school or place of care is closed or whose caregiver is unavailable due to COVID-19 precautions; or
6. The employee is experiencing a “substantially similar condition” as specified by certain federal agencies.

Q. Are employees who lose pay as a result of COVID-19 eligible for unemployment benefits?

A. The California Employment Development Department determines whether workers are eligible for unemployment benefits; please refer to the EDD’s COVID-19 FAQs for additional information. Employees who wish to file unemployment claims may do so on the EDD website. School district employees who need wage history information to file with their unemployment claim can send an email request to TCOE Payroll.
Q. Are employees who lose pay as a result of COVID-19 eligible for Paid Family Leave benefits through the California Employment Development Department?

A. Not all public schools participate in the State Disability Insurance (SDI) system. If you are not sure if your district or bargaining unit participates in SDI, contact your school business manager or Superintendent to find out. For TCOE employees, classified staff do participate in SDI and may be eligible for Paid Family Leave benefits, which are paid from SDI contributions. Benefits can be filed for through EDD. TCOE Certificated positions are not SDI covered, therefore benefits through this program are not available for TCOE employees who fill certificated positions.