

CITY OF GRAND PRAIRIE
HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Section D: **RISK MANAGEMENT**
No. 12 **Pandemic Response**
Revised and Approved: **04/08/2022**

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This policy provides guidelines for management and employees in the event of a declared pandemic at the federal, state or local level requiring activation of the City of Grand Prairie's Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP).
- 1.2 A pandemic could disrupt continuity of essential City services due to significant and sustained employee absenteeism and supply chain interruptions, therefore this policy's intent is to protect employees' health and safety as well as minimize the impact on the delivery of City services.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all city employees.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 Pandemic – novel virus or disease that emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population causing an outbreak occurring over a wide geographic area and affecting an exceptionally high percentage of the population regionally, nationally and/or worldwide.
- 3.2 Social Distancing - actions taken to limit person-to-person contact during a pandemic.
- 3.3 Telecommuting – a mutually agreed upon arrangement between the employee and their manager, and approved through a Deputy City Manager, in which an employee is approved to perform work duties from an alternative work site for a specified period of time.

4.0 Procedures

- 4.1 This policy is only effective upon activation of the City's COOP by the City Manager or Office of Emergency Management (OEM) as related to a declared pandemic and remains effective for the duration of the activation or until amended.
- 4.2 The effects of the Pandemic COOP and/or this policy will confer no new privilege, right of appeal, transfer, promotion, reclassification, compensation, or other right of position or status that is otherwise not part of the established City of Grand Prairie policies and procedures.
- 4.3 Each department director should continue to maintain proper staffing levels and in priority order to maintain essential functions in either your position or in other functions as assigned during the pandemic. Staffing modifications should be coordinated through the OEM and the City Manager's Office as necessary as circumstances change through the course of any pandemic.
 - a. To ensure continuity of operations, departments should plan for alternatives and options due to employee absenteeism and possible delivery disruption of products and services by outside vendors.
 - b. If the pandemic outbreak is widespread regionally or nationally, outside governmental organization assistance may be compromised or limited.
 - c. Employee absenteeism may spike due to employee and/or family member illness, and/or school, daycare and/or eldercare closings.

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- d. Directors/Managers will determine any specialized Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needed to maintain emergency operations. This may include mandating employees to wear masks in necessary business areas/units, with exception to any medical accommodations as appropriate. See Section 11.0 Face Coverings/Masks below for more information.
- e. City staff and/or resources may be required to provide services not currently performed as deemed necessary.

5.0 Communication

- 5.1 The City will designate a communication plan and team to provide clear, consistent, coordinated and ongoing communication to employees and the public.
 - a. This team will include members from the City Manager's Office, Marketing and Communications, the OEM, or others as deemed necessary by the City Manager's Office.
 - b. The communication plan should include:
 - 1) What, when, and how information will be communicated;
 - 2) Where questions should be referred and who will provide responses;
 - 3) Roles and responsibilities;
 - 4) Staffing priorities/impact/considerations;
 - 5) Provisional changes to assignments/administration
- 5.2 Departments should also rely upon, and relay to the communications team, guidance from their applicable sources/agencies who provide operational guidance for their business practices (such as EMS, Public Health, Centers for Disease Control, etc. as appropriate).
- 5.3 OEM shall ensure departmental COOP plans/annexes are maintained, updated and readily available to departments upon activation and offer assistance as needed. This includes identifying such personnel as operationally essential to maintain emergency operations.
- 5.4 Departments shall keep their staff informed as appropriate for all business operations, COOP procedures impacting them, expectations around communication, closures, staffing, and related functions.

6.0 Staffing/Telecommuting/Work Assignments

- 6.1 To ensure continuity of City operations during an extended pandemic, departments, including Human Resources, may simplify processes temporarily in order to meet staffing and operational needs/requirements.
- 6.2 Departments shall rely upon one another as usual for decisions/assistance needed outside their expertise during a pandemic to reach sound business decisions (use of Purchasing, City Attorney's Office, etc).
- 6.3 Temporary staffing, as needed, may be coordinated through Human Resources via agreements in place.
 - a. Departments should work proactively with Human Resources to anticipate temporary staffing needs, especially for projected specialized, hard to fill, or technical positions during the COOP activation as these may be the first to be exhausted by temporary agencies.
- 6.4 Directors/Managers will be responsible for modifying work assignments, work hours, and/or shifts, authorizing telecommuting, and/or any other necessary changes outside normal business practices to minimize interruption of critical essential services and for social distancing, if needed.

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- a. Such changes must be closely coordinated with the City Manager's Office, the Communications team, Human Resources and Payroll staff to ensure operational efficiency, consistency and to ensure proper management of pay and pay types impacted by change.

6.5 Telecommuting

- a. Telecommuting may be considered and identified as an alternate work schedule, authorized by their Director/Division Manager during a declared pandemic and activation of the COOP for certain essential functions.
- b. Directors/Managers determine, at their sole discretion, what, if any, essential functions and staff are deemed reasonable, practical and allowable for telecommuting.
- c. Directors must communicate plans for telecommuting within their department to their Assistant/Deputy City Manager prior to commencement.
- d. Departments should follow provisions of A02-Telecommuting for specific details of any telecommuting arrangement allowed during a pandemic.

6.6 Positions/Assignments/Work Duties/Shifts:

- a. During a pandemic, employees may be reassigned, re-deployed, or transferred to a different position, shift, work location/worksites as deemed necessary by management in order to maintain essential services.
- b. Employees are expected to assist with other duties as assigned during these unique circumstances.
- c. The City may choose to extend the introductory period on one or more occasions for all full and part time employees hired within a specific period of time. The extension may be for the number of months deemed necessary, under existing circumstances, to properly assess work performance, conduct and all other skills for the position in which they were hired upon return to normal duties.

6.7 High Risk Personnel

- a. High Risk personnel are those employees identified by a health authority as being at higher risk of getting very sick from the illness identified. This typically involves people with specific health conditions that put them at risk such as immuno-suppressed individuals, those with heart or lung disease, etc. It may also include older individuals.
- b. High Risk personnel may be identified in any pandemic and be allowed or request special accommodations through their chain of command for approval in alternate work environment, duties, work location or setting that minimizes exposure for the duration of the Pandemic COOP activation period or until immunity is acquired through vaccination or illness.

6.8 Overtime

- a. All provisions of Policy B06 for overtime/comp time provisions apply during a declared pandemic. Employees may be expected to work outside of normal business hours for continuity of operations, especially if staffing shortages occur.
- b. Tracking of staff time, hours, and/or equipment/supplies who work on the pandemic may be required for federal reimbursement opportunities. OEM and/or Finance staff will notify personnel of specifics around this if activated.
- c. Limitation on overtime hours work may be dictated for health/safety reasons as needed.

7.0 Travel

- 7.1 The City may restrict or revoke travel privileges related to city business during a declared pandemic. This may include travel previously approved.

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8.0 Public Health Procedures and Infection Control

- 8.1 In the event of a pandemic COOP activation, employees are expected to follow any recommendations for certain medical procedures, immunizations, practices, or assessments as recommended by the City's Environmental Services Department and approved through the City Manager's Office.
- 8.2 Directors/Managers in each department are responsible to assess its work environment to determine the occupational exposure risk for staff and the public related to facilities, public access, events, and venues, to mitigate risk and exposure where practical through safeguard measures and social distancing.
- 8.3 Employees shall follow all recommendations provisions of the COOP control measures to minimize employees' and the public's potential exposure to the disease.
- 8.4 Directors/Managers have authority to limit citizen/volunteer access to public buildings, shut down facility use and/or control access to a single entry point for infection control.
- 8.5 City staff access via security badges/cards to certain areas of city buildings may be restricted or disabled temporarily for infection control where necessary.

9.0 Leave Related to Pandemic Infection/Exposure

- 9.1 It is important that all employees understand the various pay and leave flexibilities that may be utilized during an emergency crisis and to enable employees to stay home when ill or for their safety, to care for an ill family member and/or dependent, or their children's schools or childcare programs close, elder care facilities close, or facilities dismiss as a result of the emergency.
- 9.2 Employees must follow any newly created policies/practices related to the pandemic and associated absences in compliance with any federal, state, or local guidance/requirements issued as a first course of action.
 - a. After first following any provisions and any specific policies to comply with 9.2 above, the employee may then be able to utilized leave balances, as appropriate and following any other policies, to continue pay if absent for self or an eligible dependent during COOP activation or a pandemic.
 - b. Upon initial implementation of this policy, the city allowed a negative sick leave balance to be applied up to 80 hours if all leave had been exhausted in a declared emergency. This practice ended on March 31, 2020 for the purposes of the pandemic in effect at the time due to regulations issued that became effective April 1, 2020 addressing leave during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - c. The City reserves the right to adjust its leave policies, as well as allowing eligible employees to realize an appropriate negative sick leave balance in the future if authorized during COOP or pandemic response activation.
 - d. Any such negative sick leave balance allowed will be considered a salary advance and require then the employee to reimburse the City either through future accruals or cash payment. If an employee's employment is terminated prior to satisfying the negative sick accrual, a deduction shall be made from the employee's final check to the extent allowed by law to cover the value remaining that was advanced to the employee or the employee shall make a cash payment to the City for the balance remaining.
- 9.3 For employees who are absent due to extended personal or family illness during a Pandemic activation, FMLA may apply.
 - a. Management may require an employee to go home if symptomatic at work.
 - b. Employees who are symptomatic/ill may be sent home whether or not they have sufficient paid leave time accrued to cover the absence.

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- c. The city's workers' compensation carrier will provide guidance as to injury reporting for any work-related direct exposures if different than normal practices.
- 9.4 During a pandemic outbreak, some employees may become concerned about reporting to work, for fear of exposure to themselves or their families.
 - a. Directors/Managers are expected to make reasonable efforts to educate employees and minimize concerns of exposure risks.
 - b. With the potential high levels of absence during a pandemic, it is expected that all employees who are well, report for work. Employees with childcare issues directly related to the pandemic should work with their chain of command and city guidance to coordinate work accommodations as needed.
 - c. Instances of employees refusing to report to work with no reasonable grounds will be treated as unpaid unauthorized absence and will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 9.5 Modifications to leave use policies may be developed and outlined by Human Resources as deemed necessary to ensure continuity of operations during the Pandemic COOP activation period.
- 9.6 Directors and Managers reserve the right to temporarily suspend or cancel leave of well personnel should their services be required to maintain delivery of critical essential job functions. These decisions during Pandemic COOP activation are final and not subject to appeal.

10.0 Benefits

- 10.1 Benefits will be continued during a pandemic as with any other situation.
- 10.2 Human Resources, through approval of the City Manager's Office, may temporarily change benefit provisions/costs through the current medical carrier to address prevention and treatment related to the pandemic illness at hand.

11.0 Face Coverings/Masks:

- 11.1 Face coverings/masks over the nose/mouth help provide an extra layer of protection in the spread of a virus to or from others. Refer to the Policy E07-Dress Code, Section 4.3 and 4.4 for specific provisions as to allowable and prohibited face coverings.

12.0 Appendices: None