



State of California

# BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES AND HOUSING AGENCY

Gavin Newsom, Governor  
Lourdes M. Castro Ramírez, Secretary

March 16, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

As we implement strategies to comply with the recent Executive Order on mass gatherings and new guidance from California Department of Public Health, Business Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH) has decided to adopt an Emergency Telework Policy (ETP).

The ETP will allow employees to work remotely if their duties allow and with supervisor approval. This includes employees with children in school districts that have closed, employees who take public transportation to work, employees who are at risk from complications from COVID-19, and others who feel it is prudent to work remotely. Some BCSH/HCFC duties cannot be performed remotely. Supervisors must identify tasks that must be performed on-site, and may implement a rotating schedule, if necessary, to ensure those tasks can be completed in our physical offices.

If you would like to work remotely, please contact your supervisor. The supervisor will work with staff on approval and procedure and will let you know whether and when you may start your remote schedule. With respect to equipment, and as outlined in our existing telework policy, the current expectation is that staff without state-issued laptops and phones will use their own equipment and follow information security guidelines to protect privacy and promote security when working remotely.

Even as we move to an ETP, the public is relying on us to fulfill our mission. Now as much as ever, our mission is to: protect consumers by licensing and regulating California professionals and businesses; preserve, expand and fund safe and affordable housing opportunities; investigate and research earthquake-related issues to advise on ways to reduce earthquake risk and; protect the civil rights of all Californians from acts of hate violence and unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public and our work expectations remain the same.

915 Capitol Mall, Suite 350A, Sacramento, California 95814 (916) 653-4090 [www.bcsh.ca.gov](http://www.bcsh.ca.gov)

Specifically, we expect people working remotely to work during their established core work hours; establish and maintain a safe home working environment; maintain work output and quality; adhere to our data security and confidentiality security policies; and stay in frequent touch with management concerning work needs.

If you have administrative or operational questions, please let your supervisors know.

### **Emergency Telework Policy**

The State of California has a responsibility to protect its residents in cases of emergency, including but not limited to, natural disaster, terrorism and public health crisis. Moreover, the State of California has a responsibility to taxpayers to ensure that state functions are performed efficiently. As a part of this responsibility, it is important to recognize that ensuring the continuity of the critical functions of state business is necessary and may require certain staff to work remotely.

During declared emergencies, all executive branch state agencies under the Governor's authority should consider viable options for telecommute, flexible schedules, or administrative time off (ATO) for employees impacted by the emergency.

### **Emergency Telework Program Guidance**

An Emergency Telework Program (ETP) is distinct and separate from BCSH's Draft Telework Policy and may supersede the standard telework program provisions. However, all teleworkers are expected to adhere to all applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures regarding information security, equipment and workstation requirements, and safety guidelines.

### **Best Practices for Supervisors and Managers**

State agencies are encouraged to consider the following practices in developing the ETP programs.

Participation in the ETP should be based on the ability of the employee to perform tasks that can be completed from remote locations, such as a home office and the manager's assessment of the employee's ability to complete those tasks satisfactorily.

Ensure performance expectations have been discussed and are clearly understood and that telephone and email contact procedures have been defined.

Establish core periods of time which employees are expected to work. Inform employees who will not be available during normal working hours to notify their supervisor and, as applicable, seek prior approval to use leave credits to cover the time.

It is important for all employees to maintain a healthy, safe and ergonomically sound work environment while working at home. To the extent feasible, employees should:

- Learn and apply ergonomic safety practices.
- Establish and maintain a safe home office environment.
- Adhere to department policies around the security and confidentiality of data and information.
- Proactively stay in touch with management concerning work needs while teleworking.

### **Worker's Compensation**

If an employee incurs a work-related injury while teleworking, worker's compensation laws and rules apply just as they would if such an injury occurred at the main office. Employees must notify their supervisor immediately and complete all necessary documents regarding the injury.

### **General guidance for all state employees from CalHR:**

#### What You Should Do

- Stay informed by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website [here](#); the California Department of Public Health website [here](#) and the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency website [here](#). All websites are updated daily with the latest information and advice for the public.
- In order to reduce the spread of viruses (including COVID-19) at work, employees should take the following steps to protect themselves and those around them:
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
  - Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  - Stay away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough.
  - Follow guidance from public health officials.
- If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or health condition, it is important for you to take precautions to reduce your risk of getting sick. Actions employees can take, in addition to the above steps, to reduce the risk include:
  - Stay away from large gatherings and crowds.
  - Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel.
  - Clean and disinfect your home to remove germs; practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.
- If you feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have traveled internationally or were in close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the 14 days before you began to feel sick, seek medical care. Before you go to a

doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.

- In response to this new virus, remember to be respectful, fair, and without bias in your interactions with all persons. Do not assume someone of a particular national origin, race, or background is more likely to have COVID-19.

#### What You Should Know

- If an employee is subject to quarantine or self-monitoring from a local public health department, they will be provided Administrative Time Off (ATO) and telework will be considered, consistent with department policy. All requests for ATO must follow the department request and approval process. However, an employee who chooses to travel after knowing the risks and becomes subject to quarantine will not be provided ATO and the employee should contact their department's human resources office regarding leave options.
- The Department of General Services (DGS) started a more frequent and rigorous disinfectant regime focused on high-touch surfaces, paying extra attention to surfaces in public areas such as doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, etc. In addition, DGS is ensuring public hand sanitizer dispensers are in all DGS-managed state offices. Within state-leased buildings, DGS contacted lessors to determine what actions they are taking to ensure that public areas are cleaned regularly, and that hand sanitizer dispensers are available in their buildings.
- An employee who has been subject to quarantine or self-monitoring as issued from a local public health department and tests positive for COVID-19 or otherwise becomes ill shall, no sooner than 14 days after the quarantine or self-monitoring began, be able to use leave credits of all types available. Employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are caring for a family member who has tested positive for COVID-19 may be eligible for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or California Family Rights Act (CFRA). Please contact the department human resources office regarding eligibility and available leave options.

Because of the evolving nature of the emergency, employees are encouraged to check the public health links provided in this communication for the most current information.

Finally, I want to thank you for your continued dedication to our mission and to the people we serve. I appreciate your flexibility during this very difficult time, even as we navigate uncertainty in our personal lives and the world around us.