



# COVID-19 EMPLOYEE FAQs

## March 28, 2024

### Background

On March 16, 2020, Alameda County issued a Shelter-In-Place Order in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While the Shelter-In-Place Order is no longer in place, several COVID-related regulations, rules, laws, and orders remain in effect.

To keep employees informed, the City regularly updates and distributes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). As of the date listed above, this document represents the latest version of those FAQs, which replaces previous versions.

These FAQs contain important information regarding safety, operations, and benefits related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as circumstances develop, and rules and regulations evolve, the City will update these FAQs to align with evolving best practices.

Generally, the City follows best practices provided by the California Department of Public Health and the Alameda County Health Department, while adhering to the COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations:

- <https://covid19.ca.gov/>
- <https://covid-19.acgov.org/index.page>
- <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/>
- [https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/Non\\_Emergency\\_Regulations/](https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/Non_Emergency_Regulations/)

This FAQ addresses the following topics. Use the links below to jump to that topic:

- [Relevant Authority](#)
- [Current Work Expectations](#)
- [Employee Telecommuting Options](#)
- [COVID-19 Safety Protocols](#)
- [Face Coverings & Personal Protective Equipment](#)
- [Vaccine Information](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing and Exposure](#)
- [COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave](#)
- [Returning to Work after Testing Positive for COVID-19 or Experiencing COVID-19 Symptoms](#)

**Please review every FAQ. If you have questions, please contact your supervisor, manager, or Departmental HR Single Point of Contact (SPOC).**

## Relevant Authority

### 1. On what rules, regulations, and/or authority has the City based its COVID-19 policies and procedures?

City policies and procedures related to **employee** safety and conduct are derived from the [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#). Those regulations were adopted by the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board on December 15, 2022, and took effect on February 3, 2023. The regulations will remain in effect for two years after the effective date, except for the recording keeping subsections that will remain in effect for three years.

City policies and procedures related to **public** safety and conduct are based on direction provided by Alameda County Public Health. Detailed information regarding the County's guidance can be found [here](#).

Finally, the City also considers advice and guidance provided by both the State of [California's —Health and Human Services Agency](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

The City's policies and procedures are also based on specific applicable laws which require the City to perform some specific action related to COVID-19. Those laws are referenced below when applicable.

## Current Work Expectations

### 2. Am I required to work under the current rules and regulations?

**Yes.** On June 15th, 2021, the State of California fully reopened the economy. This means that most COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. Accordingly, all Oakland employees are expected to work while adhering to applicable COVID-19 policies and procedures.

### 3. I am over the age of 65, am I required to work?

**Yes.** While the risk of severe illness due COVID-19 likely increases with age, there are currently no additional restrictions placed on individuals of a specific age.

### 4. If I have a medical condition that makes me particularly susceptible to COVID-19, am I required to work?

**Yes.** While individuals with specific underlying medical conditions may have increased susceptibility to COVID-19, there are currently no broadly applicable additional restrictions placed on individuals with perceived or actual underlying medical conditions.

However, employees who believe that they require a reasonable accommodation due to a mental or physical disability should contact Risk Management to begin the Interactive Process. Generally, applicable disability law requires the City to provide reasonable accommodation to employees who, because of their disability, are limited in or unable to perform one or more of the essential functions of their job.

## Employee Telecommuting Options

### 5. What telecommuting options are available to City Employees?

City of Oakland *Administrative Instruction 594 – Employee Telecommute Policy* explains the telecommuting options available to City Employees. Information and applications related to AI 594 are available [here](#).

### 6. Is telecommuting available as a reasonable accommodation due to my susceptibility to COVID-19?

**Maybe.** Telecommuting as a reasonable accommodation is not available under AI 594. Telecommuting under AI 594 is provided for operational reasons at the City's discretion; it is not an employee entitlement and it can be discontinued at any time.

However, employees who believe that they require a reasonable accommodation due to a mental or physical disability should contact Risk Management to begin the Interactive Process. Generally, applicable disability law requires the City to provide reasonable accommodation to employees who, because of their disability, are limited in or unable to perform one or more of the essential functions of their job. Reasonable accommodations are determined through the interactive process, individually, on a case-by-case basis.

### 7. How do I code my time if I am approved to telecommute?

Employees who are telecommuting should code their timecard as "REG" (NONSWORN).

### 8. May I work overtime if I am approved to telecommute?

**Yes.** However, overtime still requires advanced authorization from your supervisor. Managers and supervisors of telecommuting employees are strongly urged to schedule any required overtime in advance.

### 9. What if I get sick while telecommuting or need to care for an ill family member?

Just as if you were working from the office, you must immediately let your supervisor know if you are too sick to telecommute, need to care for an ill family member, or

need to care for a child for any COVID-related reason. You can use your accrued paid time off or other available leave benefits.

#### **10. What if I do not feel comfortable or safe reporting to work in person?**

Although the City previously allowed employees to liberally use leave, including unpaid leave based on pandemic related concerns, the City has returned to normal leave practices.

Employees' still experiencing feelings of unease related to the pandemic are encouraged to speak with their personal medical provider, to contact their Employee Assistance Program Representative, and/or to raise those concerns with their direct supervisor.

### **COVID-19 Safety Protocols**

#### **11. What safety protocols does the City have in place to mitigate workplace risk created by COVID-19?**

The City of Oakland implemented Citywide COVID-19 Prevention Procedures in compliance with California Code of Regulations, Title 8, section 3205. Individual departments have also created supplemental plans to address department specific issues. Each document is modeled after the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Model Prevention Procedures. Model procedures are available [here](#). The City's program is available [here](#).

#### **12. What physical distancing requirements are currently in place?**

Barring a COVID-19 "outbreak" as defined by Cal/OSHA, physical distancing is no longer required under any law or regulation. But all people, regardless of vaccination status and location, are encouraged to socially distance to the extent practicable. Additionally, there are no capacity limitations for locations or spaces due to COVID-19.

#### **13. What physical barrier requirements are currently in place?**

Cal/OSHA has lifted all partition and barrier requirements. Physical barriers are no longer required by law or regulation.

#### **14. What cleaning and disinfecting is required under the law?**

Cal/OSHA has lifted all cleaning and disinfecting requirements. Specialized cleaning and disinfecting are no longer required by law or regulation.

## Face Coverings & Personal Protective Equipment

### **15. Am I required to wear a face covering while at work?**

No, Per Oakland City Council Resolution No. 89542 and extension, the requirements to wear and provide Face Masks in City Facilities pursuant to this Resolution expired at midnight on July 1, 2023.

In any case, according to the California Department of Public Health, masks—especially those that offer the best fit and filtration (e.g., N95s, KN95s, KF94s)—can assist in protection against COVID-19 infection.

A “face covering” means a surgical mask, a medical procedure mask, a respirator worn voluntarily, or a tightly woven fabric or non-woven material of at least two layers (i.e., fabrics that do not let light pass through when held up to a light source) that completely covers the nose and mouth and is secured to the head with ties, ear loops, or elastic bands that go behind the head. If gaiters are worn, they shall have two layers of fabric or be folded to make two layers. A face covering is a solid piece of material without slits, visible holes, or punctures, and must fit snugly over the nose, mouth, and chin with no large gaps on the outside of the face.

A face covering does not include a scarf, ski mask, balaclava, bandana, turtleneck, collar, or single layer of fabric. This definition includes clear face coverings or cloth face coverings with a clear plastic panel that, despite the non-cloth material allowing to pass through, otherwise meet this definition and which may be used to facilitate communication with people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing or others who need to see a speaker's mouth or facial expressions to understand speech or sign language respectively.

In some cases, City of Oakland employees are required to wear a face mask indoors.

Employees should not use face coverings when doing so would be dangerous, such as when vision might be obstructed or when using tools or equipment that could become entangled with the covering.

If your Department requires you to wear a face shield, N95 mask, gloves, or other required personal protective equipment (PPE), you shall wear full PPE required by the Department while working.

### **16. Will the City provide me with a cloth face covering?**

The City will provide face coverings and ensure they are worn when required by orders from the California Department of Health (CDPH). Additionally, The City will provide and ensure use of face coverings during outbreaks and major outbreaks.

## **17. When masks are generally required, are there exceptions?**

Yes, but they are limited. A face covering is not required when a person is in a personal office (a single room) with the door closed if the public or co-workers do not visit the room.

However, you must have a face covering available should someone enter the office or room. You must also wear a face covering if you work in a cubicle or enter a common space, including restrooms and reception areas. Please consult your supervisor should you have questions.

A face covering is also not required by an individual if that individual can show either: (1) a medical professional has advised that wearing a face covering may pose a risk to the person wearing the mask for health-related reasons; or (2) wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines. Should you need a medical exception, please contact Risk Management.

## **18. Are patrons accessing City services required to wear a face covering?**

No, Per Oakland City Council Resolution No. 89542 and extension, the requirements to wear and provide Face Masks in City Facilities pursuant to this Resolution expired at midnight on July 1, 2023.

As a building owner and employer, and to protect our employees and visitors, the City of Oakland may impose stricter masking requirements than what is currently required by state or local public health authorities.

## **Vaccine Information**

## **19. Where can I find up-to-date information about the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Please visit the following websites for information on the COVID-19 vaccine:

- [Centers for Disease Control State of California](#)
- [Alameda County Public Health Department](#)
- [We are Greater than COVID](#)
- [World Health Organization COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker](#)

## **20. Who can be vaccinated?**

Everyone 5 years and older is eligible to be vaccinated for free. Vaccination is the most important tool to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

**21. Is the vaccine mandatory?**

No. While the City of Oakland adopted *Administrative Instruction 593 - Employee Mandatory Vaccination Policy* on October 4, 2021. That AI was suspended on April 30, 2023.

**22. Will the City provide me paid leave, time off, or allow me to be vaccinated on the clock?**

No.

**23. Will the need to quarantine, isolate, or be excluded from work change based on my vaccination status?**

No. Cal/OSHA previously mandated different standards based on an employee's vaccination status. However as of May 6, 2022, all protections now apply regardless of vaccination status and requirements do not vary based on an employee's vaccination status.

## COVID-19 Testing and Exposure

**24. How do I get tested for COVID-19?**

Employees desiring a COVID-19 test can contact their personal doctor, clinic or City's contract vendor.

**25. If I test positive for COVID-19, what should I do?**

- Follow the guidance of your medical provider.
- Inform your supervisor or Risk Management. The City will comply with California's confidentiality laws and will not disclose your identity unless required by a California County Health Department or compelled by law.
- Understand that the City is required to exclude you from the workplace as set forth in these FAQs.
- Remain under home isolation and follow the recommendation of your physician until you are cleared to return to work.
- Upon receiving notice of your COVID-19 positive test results, the City will conduct an internal exposure investigation and take additional actions as directed by the Alameda County Public Health Department.
- If you test positive through the City's COVID-19 testing, please contact your personal doctor immediately for further guidance.

## **26. What will the City do if a co-worker tests positive for COVID-19?**

If a City employee reports to a worksite, then later tests positive for COVID-19, the City and Risk Management or designated Department Infection Control Officer (DICO) will assess the exposure. Risk Management and designated DICOs have implemented internal COVID-19 exposure investigation guidelines.

Upon learning of a COVID-19 positive employee, the City and Risk Management/DICO will investigate and trace the employee's steps at the workplace to identify other employees who may have had "close contact" with the COVID-19 positive employee. The City will assess across Departments to identify everyone who may have been exposed.

The City relies on the Cal/OSHA definition of "close contact," which Cal/OSHA defines as being within six feet of a COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or greater in any 24-hour period (unless close contact is defined by regulation or order of the CDPH. If so, the CDPH definition shall apply).

Exposed employees identified through the exposure investigation will receive an individualized communication from Risk Management or the DICO with specific instructions. Typically, the exposure investigation is completed and notices sent out within the same workday, but in any case, not more than 24 hours after learning of the possible exposure. If an employee did not receive an exposure notice from Risk Management or a DICO, that means they were not identified as a close contact of the COVID-19 positive employee. Even so, employees who remain concerned about their COVID-19 status should contact their personal medical provider or take advantage of City-funded COVID-19 testing. Please understand that an exposure investigation is not perfect, but the City is committed to using all efforts to identify employees who had close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual.

All notices of potential exposure must be sent to Risk Management or a DICO. Risk Management (or DICO) will perform an exposure investigation and the associated workplace investigation. Following the investigation, Risk Management will individually notice possible close contacts and will generally notice the subject Department Director and all other Department Directors. This notice will contain all information required by and allowed under law while respecting employee privacy. Department Directors will, in turn, notice affected employees and subcontractors as required. Employees and subcontractors will be noticed by email. Employee Relations will notify employee representatives as required.

The City will not disclose the identity of the COVID-19 positive employees unless required by law.



**27. What if I have been exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace?**

The period before an employee can return to work after a close contact has been updated by the California Department of Health (CDPH). And, Absent contrary direction from the Alameda County Public Health Department, the following rules apply to employees who experienced close contact.

<p>For employees who are <b>asymptomatic</b>.</p> <p>Applies to all employees, regardless of vaccination status.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposed employees must wear face coverings around others for a total of 10 days after exposure.</li> <li>• If an exposed employee tests positive for COVID-19, they must follow the requirements for positive COVID-19 cases.</li> </ul>
<p>For employees who are <b>symptomatic</b>.</p> <p>Applies to all employees, regardless of vaccination status.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately leave the workplace and stay home and away from others until at least 24 hours after both your COVID-19 symptoms are mild and improving, and you have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication)</li> <li>• Wear face coverings around others for a total of 10 days</li> </ul>

If you experienced close contact, you should contact and follow the directions of your personal healthcare provider.

You must also update your supervisor as to whether you will report to work.

**28. What if I have been exposed to COVID-19 outside the workplace?**

The regulations issued by Cal/OSHA also apply to exposure outside of the workplace.

If you had an exposure to someone outside the workplace who is diagnosed with COVID-19, you must contact and follow the directions of your personal healthcare provider. Additionally, you are eligible for the City-provided COVID-19 testing at no cost to you. You must update your supervisor as to whether you will report to work.

Employees excluded from the workplace due to an exposure that is not work related may use their accrued leave during the period of exclusion or utilize unpaid leave if no telecommute options are available, and the employee is otherwise able and willing to work. Employees who choose not to use their accrued leave (or do not have any accrued paid leave) must be placed on an unpaid leave of absence.

**29. If I think I have been infected with COVID-19 or I am experiencing flu-like symptoms, what should I do?**

The CDC, California Department of Public Health, and Alameda County Public Health Department recommend that if you suspect that you have been infected with COVID-19, that you stay home to minimize the potential spread of COVID-19. Additionally, the City mandates that you **do not report to work sick**, especially if you are experiencing flu-like or COVID-19 symptoms. It is imperative that we limit COVID-19 exposure.

If you experience COVID-19 symptoms, please contact your supervisor to inform them that you will not be reporting to work or are unable to telecommute. You can use your accrued paid time off or other available leave benefits.

Additionally, alert your doctor if you experience symptoms or have questions about your symptoms. Minimizing the spread of the virus is critical and you must follow the guidance of your physician. Please notify Risk Management if you receive a positive COVID-19 test result and your Single Point of Contact (SPOC) can guide you through City leave policies.

**30. What if I need an accommodation for work due to COVID-19?**

If you feel you need such an accommodation, please contact your Department Single Point of Contact and/or Risk Management as you would for a FEHA accommodation under Administrative Instruction 139.

## COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave

**31. What COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave is currently available?**

There is currently no supplemental paid sick leave available to any employee for COVID-19 related reasons. Employees who miss work due to COVID-19 or related reasons must utilize other available leave / benefits.

## Returning to Work after Testing Positive for COVID-19 or Experiencing COVID-19 Symptoms

### **32. If I tested positive for COVID-19, experienced COVID-19 symptoms, or was made to isolate/quarantine by a medical provider, when can I return to work?**

First and foremost, you should follow the direction of your medical provider. Neither Risk Management nor DICOs can provide medical advice to City employees. Additionally, the period before an employee can return to work after testing positive is set by Cal/OSHA.

Absent contrary direction from the California Dept. of Public Health or the Alameda County Public Health Department, the following rules apply to positive employees.

<p>Requirements apply to all employees, regardless of vaccination status, previous infection, or lack of symptoms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Isolation can end, and employees may return to the Workplace when at least 24 hours after both your symptoms are getting better overall, and you have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication)</li><li>• You may also return to the workplace when released by a medical provider</li><li>• Wearing face coverings around others are required until 10 days have passed since COVID-19 symptoms began, or For COVID-19 cases without symptoms, face coverings are required until 10 days have passed from the date of their first positive COVID-19 test</li></ul>
--	---