



MONTANA STATE GOVERNMENT

WORKSITE COVID-19 GUIDANCE

UPDATED ON JANUARY 26, 2022

The Gianforte administration is committed to providing a safe and productive work environment. The administration continues to monitor workplace operations and remains flexible in addressing issues as they arise. Agency management and individual employees are asked to continue working together to meet operational needs and to serve the citizens of Montana.

The guidelines below are effective January 26, 2022 and apply until further notice.

Please note: *Some of the requirements in this document may not apply to all employees, such as employees working at the men's and women's prisons, other correctional facilities, the Vets' Home, the State Hospital, other DPHHS facilities, and employees working in some occupations that have close contact with citizens, such as social workers and probation and parole officers. Employees working in these facilities or occupations should follow direction provided by their agencies' management.*

VACCINATIONS

The Gianforte administration strongly recommends employees receive a [COVID-19 vaccine](#) and stay [up to date](#) with their vaccinations. COVID-19 vaccines greatly reduce the risk of serious illness or death and protect the people around you.

The best way to be protected from COVID-19 is to receive one of the safe and effective vaccines available now. COVID-19 vaccines were evaluated in tens of thousands of participants in clinical trials. The vaccines meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) rigorous scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency-use authorization or approval.

COVID-19 vaccines are available at local pharmacies, medical facilities, health departments, Montana Health Centers, and providers' offices. Go to [vaccines.gov](#) to find vaccines available near you.

Currently there are several other respiratory diseases (e.g., influenza and RSV) in circulation in Montana. All employees should get their annual influenza vaccine.

The State of Montana Benefit Plan (State Plan) provides coverage for the COVID-19 and influenza vaccines without cost to members. If you have questions about vaccine coverage, contact Health Care & Benefits Division at (800) 287-8266 or benefitsquestions@mt.gov.

Because paid COVID-19 leave expired on September 30, 2021, employees may no longer use paid COVID-19 leave for absences from work related to obtaining a COVID-19 vaccine or for vaccine-related side effects. However, employees may use accrued sick leave, annual leave, or comp time leave for vaccine-related absences.

STAY HOME GUIDANCE

If an employee is sick with COVID-19 or is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or other respiratory disease, the employee **must** stay home and should consult with the employee's medical provider.

Agency managers can send an employee home if the employee is exhibiting signs of illness. Employees sent home and unable to work remotely will be required to use their own available sick leave, annual leave, accrued comp time leave or leave without pay. If an employee isolates because of COVID-19, agency

managers should allow the employee to work remotely if management determines that job duties allow and if the employee is well enough to work.

Employees experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should get tested. If the employee tests positive, the employee should follow the isolation guidance outlined below in “Testing Positive for COVID-19.” If testing is negative, employees should test again five days after their last exposure. Even if testing is negative, employees cannot return to work until symptoms of illness subside.

Employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 and meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) criteria for being a close contact, but do not have symptoms should follow CDC Quarantine Guidance, as outlined below in “Close Contact Guidance.”

TESTING POSITIVE FOR OR DEVELOPING SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 or develops symptoms of COVID-19, the employee should follow [CDC guidance](#) for isolation. **These employees must stay home from work for at least five days. Guidance for ending isolation for individuals with and without symptoms is included below.**

Employees who have symptoms of COVID-19, with or without a positive COVID-19 test, may return to the workplace after five full days of isolation if:

- They are fever free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication); and are
- experiencing an improvement in symptoms; and
- wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time the employee is around others in the workplace.

Employees who tested positive for COVID-19, but do not develop symptoms, may return to the workplace after five full days of isolation following their positive test if the employee wears a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time they are around others in the workplace.

Employees who test positive for COVID-19 are required to wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days, given evidence that one in three individuals remain infectious beyond the five-day isolation period.

CLOSE CONTACT GUIDANCE

Close contact is defined as interaction within six feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period with someone who has COVID-19. If an employee has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, the employee should follow the direction below. A department, with the approval of the Department of Administration, may add additional protocols or mitigation measures, as appropriate.

An employee whose job duties can be performed remotely and who is identified as a close contact with someone who has COVID-19, even if the employee has no symptoms, must:

- Stay out of the office for at least the next five calendar days and work remotely if the employee is well enough to work.
- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 until 10 days after the employee last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Get tested at least five days after the employee last had close contact with someone with COVID-19. An employee should contact agency HR staff about the availability of COVID-19 rapid tests at the agency's worksites.

Follow the guidance for isolation in the previous section, if the employee develops COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19,

Any employee identified as a close contact should also wear a mask indoors, where social distancing cannot be maintained, for 10 days after the last exposure to the infected individual.

If they choose to do so, employees identified as close contacts whose job duties *do not* allow for remote work must be allowed to stay home from work for five calendar days and use accrued sick, annual, or comp time leave while absent from work.

Employees should consult with their human resources staff to determine if the FMLA or ADA applies when addressing concerns related to COVID-19. Employees with a qualifying health condition under the ADA should consult with their supervisor and HR representative to discuss accommodation options.

Employees who do not follow the direction in this document may be disciplined.

FACE MASKS

Employees may choose to wear face masks at work, but face masks are not required in most circumstances. However, employees are required to wear face masks as described above in the testing positive for or developing symptoms of COVID-19 protocols.

At the discretion of agency management **and** the Department of Administration, employees working at certain agencies may still be required to wear face masks because of the nature of their work; specifically, employees working at the men's and women's prisons, other correctional facilities, the Vets' Home, the State Hospital, and other DPHHS facilities. This requirement may also apply to employees working in some occupations that have close contact with citizens, such as social workers and probation and parole officers.

Agency management must receive approval from the Department of Administration prior to implementing additional face mask requirements.

HIGHER-RISK EMPLOYEES

Employees who have concerns about underlying health conditions and COVID-19 risk should discuss their concerns with their healthcare providers and work with their agency HR staff to address concerns. If applicable, managers and human resources staff should ensure the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) interactive process is followed.

TELEWORK

No new telework agreements will be granted at this time. With management approval, employees who had pre-pandemic telework agreements may return to the schedules allowed in those agreements.

COVID-RELATED LEAVE TIME

The paid leave that was provided by federal law expired on September 30, 2021. Beginning October 1, 2021, employees must use their own available leave, such as sick leave, annual leave, accrued comp time, or unpaid leave, when absent from work because of COVID-19.

SELF-SCREENING

Before returning to the worksite and before reporting to work for each shift, employees should self-screen for illness.

Employees should refer to this [list of symptoms](#). If an employee is experiencing any of the symptoms on the checklist, the employee should not go to the worksite. Instead, the employee should contact the employee's supervisor and stay home. Employees experiencing symptoms should contact their healthcare providers for further guidance. Additional information can be found at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Agency managers should send employees home if they are exhibiting signs of illness while at work.

AT-HOME COVID-19 TEST INFORMATION

Every home in the U.S. is eligible for four free at-home COVID-19 tests. For more information visit [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.COVIDtests.gov). The State of Montana strongly encourages employees to use this program and order tests as soon as possible.

Additionally, the State of Montana Benefit Plan (State Plan) provides coverage and reimbursement for at-home COVID-19 tests.

Employees may purchase tests at a Navitus in-network pharmacy.

- Members will need to present their Navitus Pharmacy ID card at time of purchase at the pharmacy window.
- At-home test cost is processed at point of sale with no out of pocket cost to the member.
- To find an in-network pharmacy, members should login at navitus.com and click "Pharmacy Search."

Employees may also purchase tests out of pocket and be reimbursed.

- Members may pay for the at-home tests up front then submit a claim to Navitus for reimbursement of up to \$12 per test.
- Submit reimbursement claims using the OTC COVID-19 At Home Test Claim Form.

Reimbursement Details

- At-home COVID-19 tests will be covered at a reimbursement rate of up to \$12 per test.
- There is a limit of eight at-home tests per State Plan Member every 30 days.
- The quantity limit does not apply to test kits ordered by a health care provider.
- Tests packaged in multi-packs will be reimbursed accordingly.
- At-home COVID-19 tests must be authorized by the FDA to be eligible for reimbursement.
- At-home tests purchased before January 15, 2022, are not eligible for reimbursement.

If you have questions about at-home COVID-19 test kit coverage, contact the Health Care & Benefits Division at (800) 287-8266 or benefitsquestions@mt.gov.

Additionally, at-home COVID-19 tests may be available in your community. Visit <https://dphhs.mt.gov/Covid19Testing/> for information about testing near you.

MEETINGS

Meetings can be held in person, but virtual options must be provided for all meetings. Because of the highly transmissible Omicron variant currently circulating in Montana, agencies are encouraged to hold meetings virtually as much as possible.

When determining whether to hold a virtual or in-person meeting, agency management should strongly consider which option will more effectively support business objectives and promote a healthy and safe work environment. Agencies hosting meetings or events with more than 25 people should consider implementing a symptom screening protocol for onsite attendees and must ensure that COVID-19 tests, masks, hand sanitizer, and social distancing options are available to all attendees at their request.

TRAVEL

No COVID-19 restrictions are in place for in-state travel. Agencies should follow their normal procedures for in-state travel approval.

Out-of-state business travel must be approved by an agency director or designee. Directors should consider the necessity of the travel and the location to where an employee is traveling when allowing out-of-state travel. Travel to areas where there is a high prevalence of COVID-19 infection is not recommended. For more information about COVID-19 infections in a particular location, see the [CDC's COVID Data Tracker](https://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/).

VISITORS TO STATE WORKSITES

Visitors and non-employees are permitted in state buildings and at state worksites.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Agency management is responsible for providing appropriate cleaning and disinfecting supplies and making them readily available to employees. Employees are responsible for regularly cleaning and disinfecting their personal work areas, computers and computer keyboards, and phones. Employees should appropriately clean shared areas, such as meeting rooms, kitchens, and coffee stations after each use.

Surfaces frequently touched by multiple people, such as door handles, desks, phones, light switches, and faucets, should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily. More frequent cleaning and disinfection may be required based on level of use.

The Department of Administration's General Services Division (GSD) is available to provide guidance on best practices and use of cleaning and disinfecting products. Email [GSD Service Desk](#) or call (406) 444-3060 for assistance. For additional information about cleaning and disinfecting worksites, review [guidance from the CDC](#).