

March 17, 2020

Greetings,

In the past couple of weeks, the Secretary's Office advised all state employees about how to access the most current facts and guidance about COVID-19 (coronavirus) in Vermont. The Vermont Department of Health is updating the information daily on their website at

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/infectious-disease/2019-novel-coronavirus>.

As we prepare for a COVID-19 outbreak in Vermont, our goal is to continue to provide vital services and operations to Vermonters and State employees throughout this event. To aid in this collective effort, the Agency of Administration has developed a helpful [planning tool and guidance document](#) for state agencies and departments to maintain Mission Essential Functions (MEFs) as part of their Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans. This will help expedite identifying the resource needs and tools for our staff to be able to complete the MEF with consideration to staffing shortages and teleworking. If possible, please utilize the planning tool by Friday, March 27, 2020. Following each entry, you will receive a confirmation email with a copy of your completed form.

When planning for a pandemic, the primary goal is to develop and implement strategies to maintain MEFs with anticipated reduced staffing levels. This often requires extensive workforce planning. Given the frequent changes to COVID-19, it is recommended that agencies and departments plan for an extended period of reduced staffing levels (at least a one month).

State of Vermont agencies and departments should complete the following items to ensure continuity of operations during an outbreak of COVID-19:

- Create a Pandemic Team to address Leadership direction.
- Review and/or update MEFs for your respective agency or department needed to provide vital services and operations.
- Review orders of succession to ensure functions continue to be carried out. There should be minimum of three people ready to assume duties in addition to the primary responsible person.
- Identify essential staff and minimum staffing levels required to execute MEFs.
- Identify resources and technology required for performing MEFs.
- Assess MEFs that must be performed at the physical place of work and/or those can that be performed remotely.
- Assess whether the primary responsible person, their alternates, and staff have the necessary tools and infrastructure to successfully carry out MEFs remotely, such as access to a computer, phone, and internet.
- Devolution considerations in the event a department and any organizations that support the department cannot perform their mission essential functions.



BGS will also be offering conference calls on Thursday, March 19th from 9-10 AM and Tuesday, March 24th from 2-3 PM to provide additional support to agencies and departments and answer any questions you may have.

BGS also has a group of trained COOP coordinators standing by to assist. Please contact our Statewide Continuity Coordinator, Kristen LaJeunesse, at 802-828-5553 or kristen.lajeunesse@vermont.gov, if you would like to leverage these services or have any other questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Cole". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher Cole
Commissioner