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Susanne R. Young, Secretary

To: All State Employees
From: Susanne R. Young, Secretary of Administration
Date: March 15, 2020
Subject: State of Vermont Facilities Open and Operational

Greetings State Employees:

This to follow up on Governor Scott's order of March 13 that declared a state of emergency in Vermont in response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus). The order allows the Governor to exercise his emergency powers to take important community mitigation steps to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the most vulnerable. The Governor's press statement issued on Friday can be found on-line at <https://governor.vermont.gov/press-release/governor-phil-scott-declares-state-emergency-implement-new-covid-19-community>.

Based on the best data and medical expertise available, we have learned that most individuals affected by COVID-19 will experience mild to moderate symptoms. The elderly or individuals with chronic medical conditions are more at risk of getting sick from the virus. Slowing the spread of the virus and preventing cases is the best mitigation strategy that will ensure the most vulnerable have access to the medical care they need.

The work State Government performs on behalf of Vermonters remains as critical now, especially as it relates to protecting our most vulnerable citizens. As we carry forward performing our duties and services, it is critical that we heed the mitigation and containment measures outlined by Governor Scott in the Executive Order, and in the wealth of COVID-19 related information available on the Vermont Department of Health's website at <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/infectious-disease/2019-novel-coronavirus>.

All State business functions, services, and facilities are open and operational with standard hours of operations. Please continue to report to your worksite as scheduled unless you have been directed elsewhere by your supervisor or appointing authority. If you are already scheduled to telework or on planned leave, that should continue as planned.

The commonsense steps that we all must continue to apply in our daily lives remain in effect:

- Wash your hands often and well with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



- Cover your cough or sneeze with your sleeve or a tissue. Throw tissue in the trash.
- Don't shake hands as a greeting – a simple head nod achieves the same goal.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Two items in the Governor's order impact operations across state government and should be noted: First, the order directs the Secretary of Administration, in consultation with the Commissioner of Human Resources, to develop policies and procedures to encourage and facilitate telework among those employees with the capacity to work remotely. Those guidelines can be found online at <https://humanresources.vermont.gov/content/telework-guidelines-covid-19-03-15-20>. Please consult with your supervisor to review your eligibility to telework.

Second, the Governor directed all non-essential out-of-state travel by State employees for State business to be suspended immediately. The Secretary's directive implementing this order is online at <https://aoa.vermont.gov/bulletins/memos>. Again, if you have any questions related to your return to work after travel, or your authorization to travel on state business, consult your supervisor.

All employees should review the most updated screening tool online at <https://aoa.vermont.gov/bulletins/memos>:

- Have you traveled to Vermont from one of the affected countries or regions (listed at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>)?
 - Have you been in contact, or notified you may have been in contact, with a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infected person?
 - Have you been to a health care facility (hospital, walk-in clinic, emergency room) where people infected with novel coronavirus (COVID-19) are being treated?
 - Have you had the following symptoms in the past 24 hours without medication: cough, high temperature, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?
- The CDC guidance on travel has changed since the March 13 directive was issued and the current screening tool should be used with any employee who has returned from a level 3 country as determined by the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>) in the past 14 days (even if they have previously returned to work). All supervisors have been directed by DHR to identify which of their employees will be returning from out of state on personal leave or for personal business and to contact each of them directly.

If you answer "yes" to any of the questions, contact your supervisor before returning to work or immediately upon return.

I appreciate departments and agencies continued vigilance in following the Department of Health recommendations. Additional options for employee work teams to consider include:

- Remind employees they should stay home if they are sick and contact their primary care provider.
- Limit in-person meetings opting to use online conferencing, email or phone whenever possible.
- Keep essential in-person meetings short, held in large meeting rooms, limit close proximity, and avoid shaking hands.



- Recommend employees limit access to congregated rooms, like kitchens or break rooms or other areas where people socialize.
- Practice social distancing.

In addition to these steps that we can all take in the workplace and in our daily lives, posters will be placed in all state building entrances to caution against entrance from the public if they have travelled to certain areas, who have been exposed to COVID-19, or who are symptomatic. Personal handwashing and hygiene signs have already been placed at worksites and social distancing posters will be posted shortly. Additional cleaning protocols and air handling steps have been taken in state buildings and BGS has worked with landlords in state-leased buildings to apply the same protocols.

All state employees are encouraged to start their workday tomorrow by catching up and staying current on COVID-19 resources for state employees at the Vermont Department of Human Resources website at https://humanresources.vermont.gov/covid_19_resource_page which include: Agency of Administration directives, DHR guidance, and other documents related to COVID-19.

I will conclude by underscoring the fact that this is a fluid and changing situation. Measures impacting standard business operations may change and any significant changes to standard business operations will be communicated as soon as possible as they evolve. Please look to the DHR COVID-19 webpage (https://humanresources.vermont.gov/covid_19_resource_page) for updates and the DHR Alerts webpage (<https://humanresources.vermont.gov/about-us/alerts-closings-delays>) for any State Government closures.

We will communicate any significant adjustments to standard business operations to you as soon as possible as they evolve.

Thank you for all you do, and as always, reach out to your supervisor or contact your Field Human Resources Administrator (<https://humanresources.vermont.gov/about-us/contact/hr-field-representative-locator>) with questions.