

COVID-19 RETURN TO OFFICE FAQS

Updated as of September 9, 2021

Summary of Document Updates:

Information has been updated in certain sections of this document as of September 9, 2021 to account for new guidance from the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) and other changes since the last iteration of the FAQs. Sections updated include:

- COVID-19 Testing (pages 6 and 7) – Updated to include new guidance on the weekly testing requirement for employees who have not submitted proof of vaccination.
- COVID-19 Vaccines (page 8) – List of vaccination sites solely for City employees removed. Information on making an appointment and finding a vaccination site are still included.
- Traveling and Vacations (page 9) – Updated to reflect current New York State guidance removing the requirement for travelers to submit traveler health forms.
- Building Ventilation (page 11 and 12) - Updated to reflect current DCAS guidance removing ventilation occupancy limits.
- Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (page 16) – Updated to reflect new DCAS guidance for staff to wear face coverings indoors while in shared workspaces and while interacting with the public.
- Physical (or Social) Distancing (page 18) – Updated to reflect new DCAS guidance that staff no longer need to socially distance except when interacting with the public.
- Reasonable Accommodations (page 20) - Updated to reflect that telework will no longer be permitted unless a reasonable accommodation is approved.
- Childcare (page 21) - Updated to reflect time & leave guidance on if an employee's child is to be quarantined.
- Work Schedules (page 24) - Updated to reflect that all staff are expected to return to the office full-time beginning September 13th, staggered schedules are still allowed.
- Work in the Office (page 25) – Updated to reflect new DCAS guidance on in-person meetings. In-person meetings are now allowed.

Letter from Commissioner Carol

HPDers:

As our city continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, Mayor de Blasio has announced that the city's municipal workforce would return to the office and/or field for five days a week starting Monday, September 13th. As we join our colleagues who have been in the office or the field over the course of the pandemic, I would like to thank you for all your hard work and flexibility over the past year and a half. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020 meant that we had to quickly transition to working in a way that was previously unfathomable. HPDers—working in the field, in the office, and at home—quickly pivoted with remarkable creativity to devise new processes and approaches to continue our operations, serve our clients and strive to meet our mission to produce and preserve affordable housing and keep New Yorkers safe in their homes. Through it all, we've come away with innovative processes and programmatic solutions that will continue and make us a stronger agency.



I know the transition away from telework to being in the office or field full time is a big shift for many. To ensure uniformity across all municipal workers, the Mayor chose to reinstate full time in-office schedules for all staffers at the same time. Coinciding with this return is the new program for City employees to prove vaccinations or get tested weekly. HPD will enforce these requirements and continue building maintenance practices as a safety measure against COVID-19. Our restart team led by Executive Deputy Commissioner Jim Quinlivan and Deputy Commissioner AnnMarie Santiago have worked in consultation with government partners and colleagues across our agency to prepare our facilities and our staff to ensure the safety of our teams reporting to the office and field, as well as planning for the safe return of staff who have been teleworking part-time. You may find more information on our plans and processes in this [Frequency Asked Questions](#) document and on our [Return to Work](#) webpage.

It's going to be great to have us all back together on a more frequent basis. I look forward to seeing all of you in the office more often!

Sincerely,

Commissioner Louise Carroll

September 9, 2021

COVID-19: Return to Office Frequently Asked Questions

This document is intended to provide answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) around the return to on-site operations of the New York City (NYC) Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). Due to the dynamic nature of the COVID-19 emergency and response, modifications, and adjustments to HPD's policies, procedures and facilities may be made as necessary.

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General Return to Office Information

Safe Practices

Q: Where can I get the most up to date information about COVID-19?

A: Please refer to [What New Yorkers Need to Know Now About COVID-19](#) for answers to many frequently asked questions about COVID-19. Visit DOHMH's COVID-19 webpage at nyc.gov/health/coronavirus for up-to-date information and guidance about COVID-19, and nyc.gov/coronavirus for other NYC resources. For questions on HPD's Return to Office Plan, please email hpdemergencyprep@hpd.nyc.gov. For questions related to time and leave, please email askhr@hpd.nyc.gov.



Q: What can I do to contribute to stop the spread of COVID?

A: You play an essential role in stopping the spread of COVID-19. Always:

- ✓ Get vaccinated. This is the best protection that you can have for yourself, for loved ones and for your co-workers.
- ✓ Monitor your health daily
- ✓ Stay home if sick
- ✓ Wear face coverings (see [Face Coverings](#) section, below)
- ✓ Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- ✓ Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve (not bare hands)
- ✓ Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth, with unwashed hands

- ✓ Do not shake hands or hug
- ✓ Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- ✓ Consider getting a flu shot during flu season to reduce the risk of contracting or spreading additional viruses
- ✓ Get tested for COVID-19 often if you are unvaccinated

Q: What is the purpose of face coverings?

A: A face covering decreases the chance of spreading COVID-19. Face coverings are especially important because people can have COVID-19 and not know it because they do not have symptoms.

Q: Where can staff get general information about face coverings, including proper face covering use and care?

A: Refer to the following DOHMH guidance:

- [About Face Coverings](#)
- [How to Put on a Face Coverings](#)
- [Face Coverings FAQ](#)
- [Two Face Coverings](#)

HPD's COVID-19 training also includes information on face coverings.

COVID-19 Testing

Q: When should I get tested for COVID-19?

A: DOHMH suggests that all unvaccinated people get tested periodically, regardless of whether they are experiencing symptoms. Vaccinated people should get tested if they are experiencing symptoms. Effective September 13, 2021, all staff who have not presented proof of full vaccination, will have to provide proof of a negative PCR COVID test, or proof of a pending test result, on a weekly basis.

Q: Where can staff learn more about COVID-19 testing?

A: Refer to [DOHMH's COVID-19 Testing: Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) about coronavirus and antibody testing. You can also call 311.

Q: When will the weekly COVID-19 testing requirement begin?

A: Starting September 13th, employees (including all contracted employees, subcontractors, part-time employees, temporary employees, interns, aides, fellows, and volunteers), who were hired prior to August 2, 2021, and who have not submitted proof of vaccination, will be required to submit weekly COVID-19 PCR test results.

Q: When must employees submit a weekly test?

A: For each day that an employee reports to work onsite, they must have had a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within the preceding seven days. This test result, which must be submitted to HR [here](#) and it must be negative. An employee who has been tested within the preceding seven days, but is still waiting for the result may report to work with a pending test result as long as they meet the criteria of the health screening and submit the test result to HR via the same link as soon as it becomes available.

Employees who fail to comply will be placed on leave without pay (“LWOP”) until they submit the required test result (or proof of a pending test result) to HR.

Q: Will the City be providing on-site vaccination and testing at City worksites?

A: Testing and vaccination are both widely available and convenient for all New Yorkers. The City will continue to bring mobile vaccination clinics to select worksites, including certain City worksites.

Q: Do rapid tests qualify?

A: Rapid PCR tests will qualify for this requirement. Antigen tests will not.

Q: Do at-home tests qualify?

A: At-home tests will not be accepted at this time.

Q: Will COVID-19 testing be offered to staff through the agency?

A: At this time, there are no plans to offer on-site COVID-19 testing to staff at HPD buildings.

Testing is widely available in NYC. Go to nyc.gov/covidtest to find a testing site or call 311; many of the sites offer free COVID testing.

Q: Will antibody test results be required to determine if someone can return to work?

A: No. Antibody tests for COVID-19 cannot be used to detect whether someone is currently sick or infected. It is also not yet known whether a positive antibody test means that someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again. Antibody tests should not be used to decide whether someone should or should not work. Antibody tests results will not be accepted as part of the weekly testing requirement for staff who have not submitted proof of vaccination.

Q: May City and contracted employees take time from their shift to get tested?

A: City employees may use City time to be tested, but some restrictions apply:

- Employees are required to get tested at the beginning or end of their shift.
- If testing is offered at an employee’s place of work, they may not use work hours to be tested off-site.
- If testing is not onsite at the workplace, employees should get tested in a place close to their home or work.
- Employees will be required to document time taken to seek testing and will be required to seek the fastest option available.
- Employees should work with their supervisors to schedule a time for testing.
- Testing time should be scheduled so that it does not have any detrimental impact on operations.

Like City employees, contracted employees may use shift time to get tested and the same restrictions apply. Contracted employees with testing available on site must use that option if they get tested during their shift. No additional funding will be provided associated with time off for testing.

Q: What is the penalty for non-compliance? Will non-compliant employees be subject to termination?

A: City staff who are in violation of the COVID-Safe Requirement to submit proof of full vaccination or complete weekly testing will be placed on Leave Without Pay ("LWOP") until they are in compliance. Employees who refuse to comply will be terminated. It is suggested that contracted organizations adopt a similar policy. If providers are noncompliant, contracting agencies will exercise any rights they may have under their contract.

COVID-19 Vaccines



Q: Where can staff learn more about COVID-19 vaccines?

A: DOHMH's website has information on eligibility, FAQs, making appointments for vaccination, and safety of the Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. Visit DOHMH's vaccine webpage [here](#).

Where are COVID-19 vaccines available?

Find a complete list of those locations [here](#). All City-run vaccination sites are open for walk-in appointments for New Yorkers. A list of walk-up vaccination sites can be found [here](#).

Q: Will vaccinations be required for staff to return to the office or work in the field?

A: HPD staff hired before August 2, 2021, are not required to get vaccinated for COVID-19. However, staff are strongly encouraged to receive the vaccine and will receive 4 hours of excused leave for travel during scheduled work hours to and from the administration site for each required administration of the vaccine. Upon submitting documentation of full vaccination status, staff will be credited with three hours of compensatory time, including managerial employees. Please reach out to Human Resources, for all vaccine-related inquiries.

Q: Are unvaccinated staff required to return to the office full-time on September 13th?

A: Yes. All staff at HPD, regardless of their own vaccination status or the vaccination status of members of their household, are expected to return to the office and resume their pre-March 2020 work schedule beginning September 13th, unless the employee is on an approved leave or has been granted a reasonable accommodation.

Q: Do staff have to tell the City whether or not they are vaccinated?

A: No. Any employee who prefers to keep their vaccination status private can do so by providing a weekly COVID-19 PCR test. Vaccinated employees who wish to remove their face covering while in the office may do so only when they are in an unshared workspace, or when they are eating or drinking; however, prior to doing so, they must submit proof of vaccination to HR, which can be done [here](#).

Commuting to Work

Q: What can staff do to ensure a safe commute to work?

A: There are some steps staff can take to safely commute to work:

- Bring a face covering, hand sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes when leaving the home.
- Make a travel plan.
- Travel during non-peak hours if possible and allow extra time for travel changes.
- Always wear a face covering on mass transit, when not able to socially distance while walking or biking, and when using car services.
- Minimize touching surfaces on mass transit. Use hand sanitizer and/or wash hands after touching surfaces.
- Whenever possible, consider other forms of commuting, including biking (with a helmet) and walking.



For more information, review the DOHMH guidance [here](#).

And see the Metropolitan Transportation Authority reopening webpage [here](#) for information about its reopening plan.

Q: Will office infrastructure be updated to support more employees biking to work?

A: The bicycle room at 100 Gold St will continue to be open, but for only a limited number of bikes (approximately 14). Additional bike racks have been installed outside of 100 Gold Street. Bike safety information and maps are available at 100 Gold St and on HPD's Intranet page.

Q: Does HPD have parking spots that I can use?

A: Currently, there is no agency parking available

for staff.

Q: Are there any parking discounts for Icon parking or others near HPD for those planning to drive into work?

A: There are currently no parking discounts provided by the City and/or HPD.

Mental Health: Stress and Support for Staff

Q: What resources are available to support staff members' mental health during the COVID-19 emergency?

A: Staff may find the following resources helpful:

- [DOHMH's Worksite Wellness](#) webpage

- [DOHMH's COVID-19: Mental Health and Substance Abuse](#) webpage
- Find emotional support through your own mental health provider or a professional available through any of the following:
 - NYC Well, a confidential 24/7 helpline staffed by trained counselors who can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages. For assistance, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or chat at [NYC Well](#). NYC Well's website offers a number of well-being and emotional support applications (apps). Visit [NYC Well](#) and click on **App Library**.
 - NYS COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline at 844-863-9314, staffed from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week, with specially trained volunteer professionals who are there to listen, support and refer if needed.
 - The NYC Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which offers free and confidential assistance to staff and family members and can be reached at 212-306-7660 or by email at eap@olr.nyc.gov

Q: What happens if the virus becomes more widespread? Will the building be closed if there is an increase in city-wide or building-wide infections?

A: HPD leadership will work with City partners to keep abreast of the rate of COVID-19 infections in NYC and monitor COVID positive cases in HPD. Based on available data and recommendations, HPD will take appropriate steps, as needed.

Keeping Us Safe at HPD

General

Q: What has been done to prepare the building for staff to return?

A: DCAS/General Services have:

- Established the one-directional flow of movement at entrances, hallways, and exits and posted signage accordingly.
- Posted multiple notices about the importance of mask-wearing. Signage is posted indicating that all elevator riders must wear a face covering and follow directional signage regarding which direction to face. People should maintain an appropriate distance while approaching and leaving elevator banks and waiting for elevators, to avoid crowding.
- Installed signage encouraging staff to use stairwells instead of elevators to minimize waiting time for the elevators.
- Installed plexiglass in customer-facing areas.
- Taken appropriate steps to ensure adequate ventilation (see below for more details on ventilation).
- Installed videoconferencing equipment in designated conference rooms, to facilitate virtual meetings.
- Established a daily cleaning schedule for high touch areas.
- Made PPE, hand sanitizer and cleaning disinfectant supplies available for all staff.
- Placed sanitizing supplies near copiers and other shared equipment.
- Implemented a daily health screening assessment enforced by the DCAS personnel or other guard personnel at our sites.

**Q: Can I ask for a partition around my cubicle?**

A: HPD currently has no further plan to install additional partitions. Additionally, excessive plexiglass will restrict air flow in an area. Plexiglass has been installed near all high-traffic areas.

Building Ventilation

Q: What has been done to ensure proper ventilation?

A: The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommends that, in general, buildings:

- Increase outdoor air ventilation
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly

- Increase air filtration.

Working in conjunction with DCAS and other managers of buildings used by HPD, our filtration and ventilation systems have been checked and upgraded to follow CDC and The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) recommendations regarding a building's preparedness for the return to office. These recommendations focus primarily on the volume of air circulating in a space and the quality of the air filtration system.

How ventilation systems generally work:

- Bring in fresh air from outside at a standard rate and disperse that air throughout the building; and
- Filter air inside the building to remove contaminants from the air.

Better ventilation means that air does not remain stagnant and free air flow is key – **wearing your mask in combination with adequate ventilation work hand in hand to reduce potential exposure.**

Working with DCAS and/or the operators of our site locations, we have confirmed that:

- Ventilation systems have been assessed and where necessary adjusted to meet the required volume of circulation (air flow). All restroom exhaust fans were checked for functionality and are operating as required.
- Ventilation filters were checked and upgraded to the Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) rating of 13 or the highest rating allowed for a particular HVAC system. Our site offices located at 1932 Arthur Avenue and 10 Richmond Terrace do not have an HVAC system and to support an increase in the number of staff that work at these locations the agency has purchased and installed standalone air purifying systems.

CDC and ASHRAE guidance suggests that, where possible, HVAC systems run using the maximum amount of outside air for two hours before buildings are occupied. In DCAS managed and in our private site office buildings, the HVAC systems will run for two hours before and after the peak periods of building occupation (e.g., in the morning and evening on weekdays). Additionally, monthly ventilation maintenance checks are performed at all of our offices.

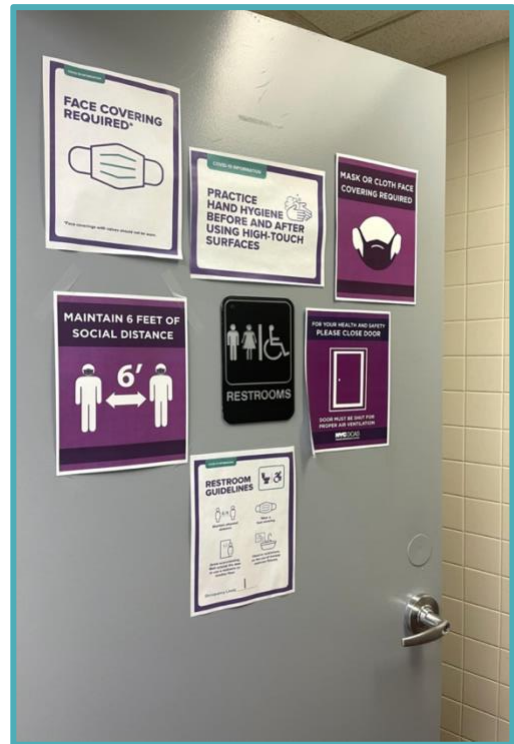
Building Systems

Q: What has been done to ensure water quality in the building?

A: HPD worked with DCAS and site office building management to ensure that water lines are safe for use. Our office buildings and water facilities have been continually used over the past year, as all of our locations have been in use by staff. HPD follows appropriate guidelines to ensure that water quality is safe, which includes periodic flushing of systems.

Q: What are the guidelines around use of restrooms?

A: Always wear a face covering while inside a restroom in an HPD building. If a restroom is too crowded, wait outside or use another restroom that is not crowded. Be courteous and limit your time in the restroom to allow others to use the restroom.



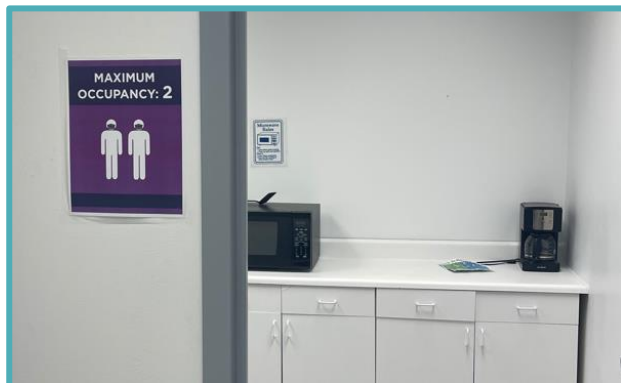
Shared Spaces

Q: Can doors in enclosed stairwells be propped open to avoid touching handles?

A: No. Fire doors in enclosed stairwells cannot be left open due to fire code regulations. However, stairwells in each building will be accessible for in-building transit. Please follow the one directional signage posted for stairwell use.

Q: Can I still use the CityTime Biometric Data Collection Device (DCD time clocks) to record my time when I am in the office?

A: Until further notice, staff cannot use the DCD time clocks in the office. All staff should use the CityTime Web Clock function on your desktop. Staff can access the “web clock” screen to record their time in, time out, meal start, and meal end, directly from the CityTime login screen by selecting the “web clock” option from the drop-down selection.



Q: Will pantry appliances be available for staff to use?

A: Yes. To ensure the safety of all, staff should wash their hands before and after use of appliances. Cleaning supplies will also be available for staff to use to clean appliances before use.

Cleaning, Disinfection, and Hand Hygiene

Q: What cleaning and disinfection measures will be in place at work sites?

A: A regular facility cleaning schedule is in place for all our workspaces to disinfect high touch areas such as door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, and shared spaces will continue to occur. At DCAS managed facilities, DCAS staff will be handling this regular cleaning and the services are either contracted for or provided by building management at our privately owned leased site offices. Additionally, public areas including lobbies and elevator cars are cleaned several times per day.

Q: Will cleaning supplies be available to staff to allow for routine cleaning of workstations and common areas?

A: Sanitizing wipe canisters and/or other cleaning supplies will be distributed to each unit. Staff can use them to wipe down individual workstations prior to beginning and at the end of their workday. Please clean shared equipment such as file cabinets and shared desks before using. **Note:** Aerosol disinfecting sprays, such as Lysol Disinfectant spray, should not be used by staff as others in the area may have fragrance sensitivity that can cause irritation or severe allergic reactions. Please do not remove or stockpile hand sanitizer or disinfecting wipes provided for use at the office.

Q: What is done to clean workstations after someone tests positive for COVID-19?

A: When HR learns of a staffer with a positive COVID-19 test result, they notify General Services if the employee was in the office within the past three days. General Services then requests remedial cleaning and disinfecting of the staffer's workstation, as well as any place the staffer visited for more than ten minutes, nearby bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment.

**Q: How do you properly use hand sanitizer?**

A: To properly use hand sanitizer, follow these basic instructions:

- Place a dime-size amount in the palm of one hand.
- Rub your hands together and cover your entire hand, including your wrist and between your fingers.
- Keep rubbing your hands until skin is dry.

Q: How do we ask for more hand sanitizer?

A: HPD will work to ensure that hand sanitizer is always available for staff. If you find that the large pump bottles are empty, please email General Services at gservices@hpd.nyc.gov and it will be replenished as soon as possible.

Q: Will trash pick-up in the offices resume?

A: At this time, DCAS will not be picking up the individual paper waste baskets. Employees will need to empty those in the recycle bins by the hallways.

Daily Health Screening Assessment

Q: What is the Daily Health Screening Assessment?

A: On a daily basis, staff are required to complete a mandatory electronic health screening (e-HSA) before coming to work at the link emailed to you each morning. Prior to completing the mandatory electronic health screening assessment and going into the office or the field, staff are required to check their temperature using a thermometer (see below for information on how to obtain one). Temperatures measuring at or above 100.4 F means that staff are not cleared to work in the field or office. Those who do not clear the screening requirements should not come to work (or should return home) and notify their supervisor.

If you are unable to complete the screening on your phone or other device prior to entering the building, you will complete an in-person screening verbally but **MUST** also complete the electronic screening once you get to your desk. Those who do not clear screening requirements should not come to work (or should return home) and notify their supervisor. The supervisor in turn should notify Daniel Carcana, at CarcanaD@hpd.nyc.gov. Human Resources will provide further guidance on how staff should proceed. Staff should also follow up with their health care provider or call 311 and observe all guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others.



Q: Once I've answered the health screening questions, do I have to answer them again each time I enter the building?

A: No. The health screening assessment is completed once a day. Show the green clearance email (or a printout of the clearance) each time you enter any HPD site, including after returning from lunch or an external meeting.

Q: How do I get a thermometer?

A: You may pick up a thermometer in the General Services office located in the main lobby area of 100 Gold Street, between 8AM and 5PM, Mondays through Fridays.

If you have your own thermometer and do not need one complete and return the attached waiver form to General Services at gservices@hpd.nyc.gov. If you work in a site office, you can pick up a thermometer and/or submit a completed waiver form from your Borough Chief or the Site Director.

Staff must pick-up a thermometer or submit a completed waiver form to the appropriate party as soon as possible.

Q: Is the Health Screening questionnaire going to be updated to include if you have been fully vaccinated and/or if you have traveled domestically, as quarantine is no longer required?

A: The health screening has been updated regarding travel and vaccinations. Anyone who has been fully vaccinated is no longer required to quarantine after direct exposure to a COVID case. In addition, the health screening includes questions regarding any COVID symptoms staff may have experienced within the past ten days, whether they have tested positive for COVID within the past ten days, and if they have been in close contact (within six feet for at least ten minutes over a 24-hour period) with someone who tested positive. The health screening also includes an affirmation that the employee is cleared to report to work and that they will comply with the City's face covering policy.

Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Q: When and where are face coverings needed at work?

A: All staff medically able to tolerate a face covering are expected to do so at all times while in a shared indoor City workspace, or when interacting with the public, both indoors and outdoors. A shared indoor City workspace is a communal or open office setting in which individuals cannot be separated by a closed door. Fully vaccinated employees may remove their face covering if they are in an unshared workspace (i.e., a private office with a closed door), or when eating or drinking. An individual is considered fully vaccinated two or more weeks following receipt of second dose in a 2-dose series of a COVID-19 vaccine, or 2 or more weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine. **All non-vaccinated staff must continue to wear a face covering at all times except when they are eating or drinking, or if they have a reasonable accommodation.**

Refusal to wear a face covering when required, absent a reasonable accommodation, may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination (per Revised DCAS Commissioner's Directive No. 2020-1).

Q: Who is handling face covering distribution to program staff?

A: Face masks are currently provided to all field staff. Other staff can obtain face masks upon request. Staff will receive surgical face masks unless the staffer applies for a reasonable accommodation to wear a face shield instead of a mask. (See the reasonable accommodation section for more details). If you need a face mask you can ask your supervisor or contact General Services at gservices@hpd.nyc.gov. Face shields are also available for field staff who would want to use this mask in conjunction with the use of a disposable or cloth mask.

Q: Can staff use their own face covering?

A: Yes. Staff may use their own face coverings as long as the face covering meets the requirements of the City's Department of Health but must abide by HPD's Dress Code Policy related to statements, pictures, or logos. According to this policy—to promote efficiency and effectiveness of government operations and to prevent disruption—employees are required to be appropriately dressed and properly groomed during the workday. Appropriate attire is clothing that enables employees to project a business-like and professional appearance.

A face covering with an exhalation valve is **not** permitted, as it allows unfiltered exhaled air to escape to others. An exhalation valve is a plastic piece embedded in the face covering/mask. It acts as a one-way valve that closes when you breathe in, but opens when you breathe out, expelling air from the face covering.

**Q: Will double masking be required?**

A: While double masking is not required, it is “strongly recommended” that City employees wear a face covering that fits snugly against the sides of the face and fully covers the nose and mouth without slipping, and (a) is made of two or three layers of tightly woven, breathable cloth material, or (b) consists of a cloth face covering worn over a disposable mask.

Q: What if a staff member cannot medically tolerate wearing a face covering?

A: Staff who cannot medically tolerate wearing a face covering can seek a reasonable accommodation by contacting Zenzile Vialva, EEO Officer at HPDEEO@hpd.nyc.gov or (212) 863-8329. Emails are preferred.

Q: Do field staff need to wear face masks, N95s and other PPE because of COVID-19?

A: In general, no special PPE other than a face covering is needed. However, HPD field staff are provided with disposable face masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. Face masks and gloves are also available upon request for other staff who request them. Face shields are also available for field staff who would want to use this in conjunction with the use of a disposable or cloth mask.

Q: How will mask wearing be enforced?

A: Complaints about the failure to follow COVID-19 related requirements can be reported to Anna Vaysman, at Vaysmana@hpd.nyc.gov , or to Human Resources at AskHr@hpd.nyc.gov.

Q: Should gloves be used to protect against COVID-19?

A: No. Routine glove use is not recommended. In general, gloves are appropriate when cleaning with disinfectants or caring for someone who is sick. However, gloves are available to HPD staff if they are requested.

The best way to protect yourself is to wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water is not available.

Concerns with glove use include the following:

- Using gloves can provide a false sense of security and studies have shown that most people who routinely use gloves remove them incorrectly or do not clean their hands after removing them and their hands picked up germs anyway. A 2019 study in the *American Journal of Infection Control* found that in simulations, 37% of health care workers using their normal glove removal technique contaminated their skin in the process.
- Gloves can be a source of contamination. If a wearer touches surfaces during the day while wearing the same pair of gloves, dirt and germs can be transmitted from one surface to another.
- Wearing gloves prevents a person from being able to clean their hands often, which is the most important hygiene action to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For more information, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's webpage [When to Wear Gloves](#).

Physical (or Social) Distancing

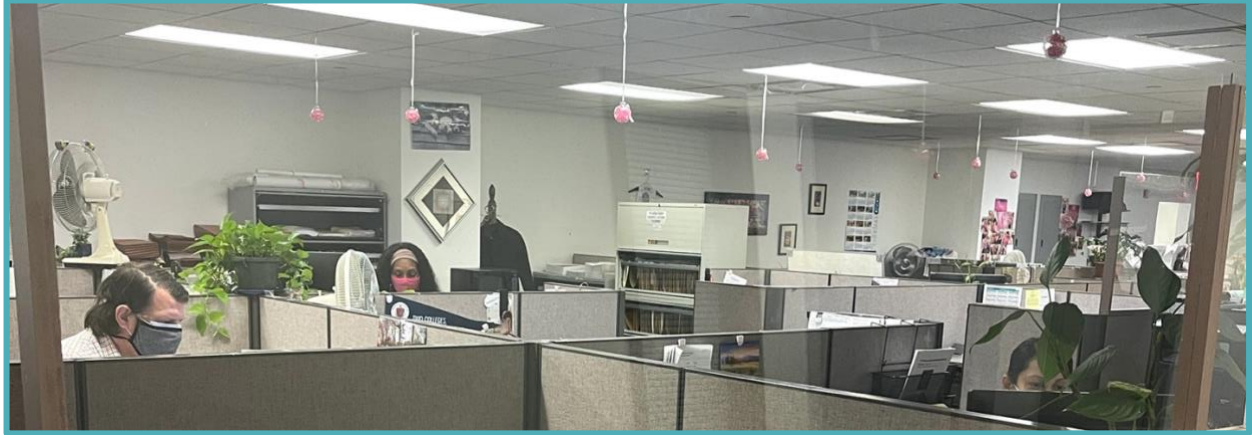
Q: How can I keep myself and others safe if we are using a shared vehicle for work?

A: Always wear a face covering in the vehicle. Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water frequently or using hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer is available for field staff and sanitizing wipes are available for those who use City vehicles to wipe down high-touch surfaces in the vehicle.

The most recent DOHMH guidance can be found [here](#).

Q: What are the current rules on physical distancing?

A: Physical distancing is not required for employees unless they are interacting with the public. If an employee is interacting with the public, they are required to stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arm lengths) from each other in both indoor and outdoor workspaces, where feasible.



Q: Are there general guidelines around visitor restrictions?

A: There are no more restrictions on visitor access to the public spaces within the site offices and 100 Gold Street. If your team needs to begin seeing members of public, please contact Hector Padilla at padillah@hpd.nyc.gov and Alnisha Maniaci at maniacia@hpd.nyc.gov with questions.

Time, Leave, and COVID-related Human Resource Policies

Reasonable Accommodations

Q: What is a reasonable accommodation?

A: A reasonable accommodation is any change to the application or hiring process, a job, the way a job is done or the work environment that allows a person who is qualified for a job to perform the essential functions of that job and enjoy equal employment opportunities. Reasonable accommodations are not available due to childcare or other caregiving issues. You can learn more about this process on the [intranet](#).

Q: When should a staff member request a reasonable accommodation?

A: Staff can request a reasonable accommodation if they need a change or adjustment in their job functions because of a disability (including an underlying medical condition related to COVID-19), pregnancy or pregnancy-related medical condition, domestic violence, or stalking, or to enable religious observance.

Q: Who should a staff member contact to request a reasonable accommodation?

A: Staff should contact Zenzile Vialva, EEO Officer at HPDEEO@hpd.nyc.gov or (212) 863-8329. Emails are preferred.

Q: What will staff need to apply for a reasonable accommodation?

A: The EEO office will inform staff of the necessary documents depending on the type of request. Reasonable accommodations can take up to 30 days to process, depending on the circumstances.

Q: Will an employee's information be kept confidential?

A: Yes, all correspondence with the EEO office is confidential. In addition, the EEO office will not disclose the staff members' medical information to the employee's program.

Q: How will supervisors/managers be informed of reasonable accommodations for their employees?

A: Supervisors/Managers are notified, via email, when the EEO office receives requests for reasonable accommodations. After a determination is made, they will receive a copy of the Determination Letter sent to the employee.

Q: If an employee's reasonable accommodation is set to expire by a certain date, will they have to re-apply for the reasonable accommodation again?

A: If an employee's reasonable accommodation is set to expire, it is not automatically renewed. The employee will need to reach out to the EEO Office to request an extension.

Q: If my reasonable accommodation request has not been reviewed/approved by 9/13/21 can I work from home until a decision is rendered?

A: If the request is for an extension of an expiring reasonable accommodation, the employee can continue to telework. However, if the request is for a new reasonable accommodation, then staff

will have to report into the office in accordance with their pre-pandemic work schedule until a decision is rendered.

Child and Dependent Care

Q: Will exceptions be made for staff who cannot return to the office due to childcare or other individual difficulties that prevent the return to the office?

A: All staff are expected to return to the office in accordance with their pre-pandemic work schedule as of September 13th. Please be reminded that reasonable accommodations are not available in connection with childcare or other caregiving issues. Employees can apply for a reasonable accommodation based on **their** medical condition or pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. If staff want to request a reasonable accommodation, they should contact Zenzile Vialva, EEO Officer at HPDEEO@hpd.nyc.gov or (212) 863-8329. Emails are preferred.

Q: Will parents of school-age children attending school from home be able to continue to telework?

A: All staff are expected to return to the office in accordance with their pre-pandemic work schedule as of September 13th. Although caregiving is not a disability for purposes of a reasonable accommodation, employees may qualify for leave based on caregiving responsibilities. Employees who qualify can apply for any of the leaves mentioned below by contacting Tricina Stallings, Director of Benefits, at Stallint@hpd.nyc.gov.

Q: What leave options are available for staff?

A: In addition to annual leave, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) is available for leave to care for a child under the Emergency Family & Medical Leave Expansion Act. This leave is available only to employees who have been employed with the City of New York for 30 days or longer. Under current guidance, eligible employees may take up to twelve weeks of Family Medical Leave to care for a son or daughter whose school or place of care has been closed or whose childcare provider is unavailable due to COVID-19 precautions and is unable to telework. This leave is not available if the employee has the option to switch their child to blended learning but chooses a fully remote schedule.

The Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is available for eligible City employees. Employees can take up to twelve weeks of job-protected leave in a twelve-month period for the following reason:

- a) the birth of a child or placement of a child for adoption or foster care;
- b) to bond with a child (leave must be taken within one year of the child's birth or placement);
- c) to care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a qualifying serious health condition; or
- d) for the employee's own qualifying serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform their job.

Q: What will happen if a child has to quarantine 10 days at home as instructed by the DOE or a daycare facility? Is there leave or a reasonable accommodation? Can I telework?

A: In these cases, staff should contact Anna Vaysman, Vaysmana@hpd.nyc.gov, for further instructions, but generally staff may telework during this time, if they are able to do so, after providing the required proof of a quarantine order to Human Resources.

Q: Can I bring my child to work if I do not have other childcare options?

A: No. Bringing children to the office is currently not allowed.

COVID-19 in the Workplace

Q: What should I do if I learn that I am COVID-19 positive?

A: Inform Human Resources of your diagnosis by contacting Anna Vaysman, Vaysmana@hpd.nyc.gov or Daniel Carcana, CarcanaD@hpd.nyc.gov. You may be required to submit proof of diagnosis. Human Resources will make any other appropriate notifications.

Q: What should I do if I learn that a close contact outside of work is COVID-19 positive?

A: Inform the above Human Resources staff that you have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive person. Human Resources will make any other appropriate notifications.

Q: As a supervisor, how can I respect employee privacy and at the same time protect employees if two people work together and one tests positive for Covid-19? Who advises the other person?

A: All COVID-related positive cases should be reported to HR, which will make all appropriate notifications. Supervisors should not make inquiries or disclose any information to staff.

Q: What if a member of an employee's household tests positive for COVID-19 or has COVID-19 symptoms?

A: Staff are required to notify Human Resources and will be given quarantine instructions and leave usage guidance. Employees may also need to produce a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. More information will be provided to the employee from Human Resources. For any questions, employees should contact the above Human Resources staff.

Q: If a staff member is at work and reports that they have COVID-19 symptoms (that are not due to a pre-existing health condition), what should their supervisor do and who should the staff notify?

A: Supervisors should instruct staff working on-site to go home immediately if sick. The supervisor should notify the Human Resources Liaison at CarcanaD@hpd.nyc.gov. Human Resources will provide further guidance on how staff should proceed. Staff should also follow up with their health care provider or call 311 and observe all guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others.

Supervisors should advise staff impacted by COVID-19 to follow current recommendations and the advice of their health care provider. Staff can receive excused leave in keeping with the [Updated Guidance for City Agencies on Leave Policy Applicable During the Outbreak of Coronavirus](#)

Disease 2019 (COVID-19), effective September 13, 2021. Human Resources will provide updated guidance where applicable.

Q: Is there a protocol for an employee that comes to work and appears ill?

A: Please inform your supervisor if you observe another employee who appears to be ill. Supervisors can consult with the impacted employee and instruct the employee to go home if they are ill. Supervisors should then reach out to Human Resources if the illness appears to be related to COVID symptoms.

Q: How will staff be notified if someone they work with has tested positive for COVID?

A: Human Resources will notify only those staff members who were in close contact with the individual who tested positive, currently defined as six feet or less for ten minutes or more. The affected individuals will be instructed to quarantine for the required length of time. To preserve the confidentiality of medical information, no other notifications will be made regarding anyone's positive diagnosis.

Q: What happens if there is high spread of COVID in a unit?

A: Human Resources is carefully monitoring all reported COVID cases on a daily basis and will take appropriate action as needed.

Q: How is HPD maintaining confidentiality of those who are COVID positive?

A: Only close contacts of the COVID-19 positive employee will be notified of potential exposure. No other information will be shared to protect the confidentiality of the staffer. HR maintains the information in a secure file that is password protected.

Q: If an employee feels sick, but well enough to work, is teleworking permitted?

A: Employees may be permitted to telework due to COVID related circumstances or as a reasonable accommodation. Employees must otherwise report to the office in accordance with their pre-pandemic work schedule.

Q: What is required when an employee is returning to work from a COVID-19 related absence?

A: Anyone returning to work from a COVID-19 related absence should reach out to Human Resources for instructions on returning to duty.

Q: Is there an accommodation or excused leave for someone who was recently vaccinated and had an adverse reaction?

A: Excused time for reactions to the vaccine is available. If you experience any symptoms after being vaccinated, please reach out to CarcanaD@hpd.nyc.gov for further instructions.

Q: What roles are managers and supervisors expected to play?

A: Managers and supervisors are responsible for monitoring their work areas and units and for communicating physical distancing and face covering requirements. They may contact Human Resources about concerns related to staff adhering to COVID health and safety policies.

Q: What if someone refuses to return to work due to fear of infection (or other reasons)?

A: Employees who fail to report to work without applicable leave may be subject to discipline. If an employee's refusal to return to work is related to an underlying medical or psychological condition, the employee should be referred to the agency EEO Office for an individualized assessment under the Reasonable Accommodation process.

Work Schedules

Q: What is being done to accommodate flexible work schedules?

A: Where possible, HPD is allowing staff flexibility with alternate schedules. Staff working in the office will be encouraged to arrive at staggered times.

Q: Is there any plan to create a long-term work from home policy, outside of the reasonable accommodation system?

A: At this time, HPD has not been advised of a plan for a telework policy beyond very limited circumstances. All staff will be required to return to work in accordance with their pre-pandemic work schedule as of September 13th unless the employee has a reasonable accommodation.

Q: Will there be remote work available if you have a positive COVID test and must self-isolate?

A: Yes, if the employee is well enough to work from home. Otherwise, the employee may be eligible to receive up to twenty days of excused leave. If you test positive for COVID, please reach out to Anna Vaysman, VaysmanA@hpd.nyc.gov or Daniel Carcana, at CarcanaD@hpd.nyc.gov for further instructions.

Q: If an employee works their 35-hour work week in the office, may they telework to earn comp time from home?

A: No. Staff cannot telework in order to earn comp time. Telework is permitted as an option for COVID related circumstances or as part of a reasonable accommodation. Employees are otherwise expected to return to the office and resume their pre-March 2020 work schedule beginning September 13th.

Other Time and Leave

Q: What if I encounter traffic in the building lobby or elevator making me late? What time should I enter into City Time? Would I enter the time I arrived at the building or arrived at my cubicle?

A: Staff should factor in building and elevator lines when planning on what time to report to work. However, we recognize that there may be circumstances where it may take staff longer than usual to arrive at their workstations. To account for this, we are providing staff with thirty minutes of flextime on days that they are reporting into the office. Please note, that this additional thirty minutes of flextime will only be available for staff who have an alternate work schedule (i.e., they are arriving outside of their regular reporting time due to staggered shifts). If staff are arriving during their regularly scheduled work hours, then they should already have a flex-band that can accommodate a time of arrival that is within a one-hour or a two-hour window. Anyone who needs to have their flex-band adjusted should first obtain supervisory approval and then reach out to timekeeping.



Q: When is a medical note required when returning from a non-Covid illness?

A: A medical note is required for absences of three days or more for non-COVID related illness.

Working in the Office



Q: Can in-person meetings be held? Will staff be required to attend in-person meetings?

A: In-person meetings are currently allowed and staff are required to attend if directed to do so by a supervisor. However, we encourage supervisors when possible to still schedule conference calls or videoconference even within the office if staff express concern. Please note: The agency has a limited number of connections for external phone calls. If you are connecting to a conference call number, please use your personal or agency-issued mobile phone.

Q: Can we use Teams to conduct employee interviews or should they come onsite to interview?

A: Since social distancing is still required when meeting with the visitors or clients, Teams is still encouraged for interviews or other meetings with external parties.

Q: What improvements will be made to allow for video- and teleconferencing?

A: HPD Tech procured several headsets and video cameras for use in the office. Please connect with your office liaison to get a headset or video camera if you do not already have one.

Commissioner's Office: Carmen Martino

- Chief of Staff, Communications/Government Affairs: Carmen Martino
- APM: Sandra Peart
- ENS: Angie Robinson
- Executive Deputy Commissioner: Christina Velazquez
- Financial Management: Pierre Geneve
- HPT Tech: William Collazo
- Development: Joy-Ann Marshall
- Office of Legal Affairs: Penny Langsam
- ONS/Tenant Resources: Ainsley Williams
- OPS: Jashawn Frederick

Q: Will staff be able to keep computer and other resources provided to assist with working from home?

A: Resources can remain with the employee at this time.

Additional Resources

Q: If staff are stressed about returning to work in the office, is there someone they can talk to for support?

A: Dealing with change is hard. Staff should let their supervisor know they are feeling stressed and talk about ways to make the transition easier and more comfortable. If staff need emotional support, they can contact the [NYC EAP](#) which offers extended hours (8 AM to 11 PM., Monday through Friday) by phone, text or video calls at eap@olr.nyc.gov or 212-306-7660. Supervisors can reach out to Human Resources for additional resources and guidance.

Q: I am grieving the loss of a loved one. Are there resources available?

A: DOHMH has guidance about grieving the loss of a loved one as well as workplace grief. Many providers are offering bereavement services by phone or chat, and faith-based and other community groups may have online services and support. The above-listed resources can also be utilized for support.

Q: How can staff help coworkers who may be struggling?

A: For colleagues in need, share [DOHMH's Coping with Stress and Social Distancing During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) or connect them to the [NYC EAP](#) or [NYC Well](#).

If a staff member knows someone who may be thinking about suicide, they can learn the warning signs, listen to them, talk about it, suggest they seek professional mental health support, and help them connect to support through [NYC EAP](#) or [NYC Well](#). See [DOHMH's Coping with Thoughts of Suicide During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).