



From the Desk of the Director: COVID-19 Update

Dear colleagues,

We appreciate your continued cooperation and dedication, which allow our critical operations to continue without disruption.

Yesterday, Governor Raimondo directed public schools to remain closed through April 3. Beginning Monday, students and teachers will participate in virtual learning. We understand employees may need additional flexibility during this period to care for their families and to accommodate these changes.

Effective Monday, March 23, employees who have a necessity to be out of work due to family responsibilities (including caring for children due to the closure of a school or childcare facility) and who are unable to telework **may request to discharge up to 20 days of accrued sick leave** in addition to any other available leave accruals. This is a temporary measure we are instituting to offer employees more flexibility in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees are required to obtain supervisor approval to discharge leave for this purpose.

While this temporary measure is in effect, the State will not require a physician's certificate or medical documentation as part of the request to discharge such sick time, and employees do not need to discharge other annual leave accruals first. However, all sick and annual leave accruals must be exhausted prior to requesting any sick leave *in advance* of accrual (a maximum of 20 days). An employee must also discharge all sick and annual leave accruals before requesting leave without pay.

State government remains open, and agency operations must be appropriately staffed to provide the programs and services upon which thousands of Rhode Islanders rely. Should the number of leave requests reach a level at which operations would be compromised, approvals will be based on fairness, equity and collective bargaining seniority provisions. Consideration will first and foremost be given to those who are sick or who are at high risk as determined through submission of the appropriate documentation to the Human Resources Disability Management Unit.

Please note that teleworking remains an option available to employees who are not customer-facing, frontline or direct care 24/7 staff. If you are

interested in teleworking, please contact your supervisor about filling out and submitting the attached fillable Teleworking Request form and Teleworking Agreement. Directors and supervisors will assist you to enable teleworking if you do not have a state-issued device. The Division of Information Technology (DoIT) stands ready to ramp up enabling services; priority will be given based on need and available resources.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B Smiley". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Brett Smiley
Director
R.I. Department of Administration