



From the Desk of the Director: COVID-19 Update

Dear colleagues,

It is important to note that as of today, there is no evidence that COVID-19 has impacted the state employee population. However, the Administration is rolling out new guidance and an updated policy – effective today – to better enable social distancing, and to simultaneously offer flexibility to our employees knowing that school vacation schedules are being moved and businesses may be making changes to their hours. It is critical that we take precautionary steps to maintain a healthy workplace for our employees and our customers.

State Operations

In line with the Governor's announcement at the press conference earlier this afternoon, we are encouraging any employees who are able, already have a state-issued device, and receive supervisor approval to work remotely from home next week.

The Administration will reassess on or before Friday, March 20, about whether to extend that guidance beyond one week and to issue further restrictions.

Other State employees should report to work as usual. This includes customer-facing, frontline and direct care 24/7 staff. Many state employees are directly responsible for programs and services that provide basic needs upon which thousands of Rhode Islanders rely. We also recognize concerns from our protective workers in the field; state agencies are working to ensure those employees have the necessary guidance and tools to perform their work. If employees have questions, they should reach out directly to their supervisors.

Teleworking

[Teleworking](#) provides greater flexibility for employees, especially those who need to make arrangements for school vacations next week.

If you believe you are a good candidate for teleworking, do not have a state-issued device, and have approval from your supervisor and/or your agency director, IT will work to accommodate you based on need and available resources. Supervisors and agency directors granting permission for teleworking must submit the appropriate paperwork to the Division of Human Resources.

Paid Administrative Leave

While there is no evidence that COVID-19 has impacted the state employee population, we will be extending paid administrative leave to employees who are out of work due to a quarantine period as a result of potential work-related exposure. As a reminder: Non-work-related exposure resulting in mandatory quarantine will be covered by available leave options: sick leave, family sick leave, vacation, compensatory leave, leave-without-pay, medical leave-without-pay.

Updated Travel Restrictions

Earlier today, the Governor announced that all Rhode Islanders who have returned from **any** international travel in the past 14 days and moving forward **must** self-quarantine. The same applies to anyone who has been on a cruise ship in the past 14 days and moving forward. Please monitor for any symptoms for the specified quarantine period as determined by the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In addition, we are suspending all state-sponsored domestic travel booked through April 2020. At this time, state employees will not be allowed to book **new** state-sponsored trips prior to August 2020. Please see the attached policy for instructions on how to cancel your trip.

Resources

The Department of Administration will continue to work closely with RIDOH to provide state employees with timely updates. Additional information is available and updated regularly on the [Rhode Island Department of Health website \[r20.rs6.net\]](http://r20.rs6.net).

Reminder: if you are not feeling well and suspect that you have COVID-19, you should not report to work, call your supervisor, and contact your primary care physician or other healthcare provider.

If you have any state employee-specific questions regarding COVID-19, please email them to doa.hrcontact@hr.ri.gov with the subject line: COVID-19. We also encourage people with health questions to call the **RIDOH COVID-19 hotline at 401-222-8022** between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Calls after business hours will be directed to 2-1-1.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B Smiley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "B" and "Smiley" written in a more legible script.

Brett Smiley
Director
R.I. Department of Administration