



From the Desk of the Director: COVID-19 Update

Dear colleagues,

First, I want to say thank you for cooperating with your supervisors and agency directors as we continue to navigate the challenges of this public health crisis.

Yesterday, the Governor announced additional measures to ensure the public health and safety of Rhode Islanders, including a mandate to shut down dine-in restaurant services and limiting gatherings to under 25 individuals.

At this point, state government will remain open. Many facets of the Executive Branch have a critical responsibility to provide basic needs upon which thousands of Rhode Islanders rely. We are continuing to ramp up teleworking capabilities so that we can enable as many employees as possible to work from home.

Today, we are announcing additional flexibility in the teleworking policy and a number of productivity boosting tools for employees who are or will be working remotely in the coming days:

Expanded Teleworking Arrangements

1) You no longer need a state-issued device to work remotely.

Directors and supervisors will work with you if you do not have such a device to enable teleworking wherever possible across state government. Your Division of Information Technology stands ready to ramp up enabling services; priority will be given based on need and available resources. If you are interested in teleworking, please contact your supervisor about filling out a teleworking form.

2) Teleworking restrictions on new employees have been waived.

If you have only been an employee of the State of Rhode Island for six months or fewer, you are now eligible to work from home under this temporary waiver. Please talk to your supervisor to see if teleworking is appropriate for you.

3) You do not necessarily need remote access to your files to telework, but consult with your supervisor to see if this is a viable option for you.

If your supervisor says you can telework and don't need access to shared drives or specific applications, you can still access your Office365 email from

your state or home device by going to www.outlook.com/ri.gov [r20.rs6.net] and entering your username and password. The Division of Information Technology (DoIT) is assisting your agencies to support the ramp up of telework.

4) Effective today, there are some changes to lobby and customer-facing state government services. Click [here](#) [r20.rs6.net] for a detailed list of those changes.

Remote Work: Productivity-Boosting Activities & Tools

Some of your daily work may be on pause or delayed due to the impact of COVID-19. If this is the case, there are many resources you can take advantage of while you're working remotely.

- **Video Conferencing Options for Public Meetings:** Yesterday, the Governor announced she has **suspended** the Open Meetings Act provision that does not allow for alternative methods to in-person meetings. We ask that if the business of your board or committee is not critical, please postpone your meeting by at least one month. If it is truly critical, there are many free or low-cost tele- or video-conferencing services that may be able to meet your needs (see attached). **Please note: public participation requirements are not suspended, and all video and teleconferencing for public meetings must allow the public to participate.**
- **Online Training Modules:** Take some time to complete required trainings, such as the State's mandatory **annual Cybersecurity Awareness Training** program, for which you have received an email with a personalized link. The ***Rhode Island Learning Center*** [r20.rs6.net] has a series of additional training modules that are relevant to employees across all State agencies. Topics include the Microsoft Office suite of programs, collaborative customers services, professional writing and email etiquette, among more. Other online training services include **edX**, which was founded in 2012 by Harvard University and MIT. It hosts online university-level courses in a wide range of disciplines, including many courses at no charge. EdX also offers MicroMasters programs to help students advance their careers and offer a path to an accelerated master's program. To start your learning journey, **register** [r20.rs6.net] for an edX account. State employees also can access free educational articles, webinars and videos on a variety of subjects through **Optum**, the state's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). To access these services, go to: **<http://www.employeebenefits.ri.gov/wellness/eap.php>** [r20.rs6.net] or visit **www.liveandworkwell.com** [r20.rs6.net] and log into your account. You can also enter the site anonymously using access code: rhodeisland, go to the Spotlights section, and peruse the site for additional information.
- **Performance Development:** Haven't set your long-term goals for the year? Now is the time to think about what you want to accomplish

and discuss with your supervisor. Remember, goals should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based. Visit [https://login.neogov.com/signin \[r20.rs6.net\]](https://login.neogov.com/signin [r20.rs6.net]) and follow the instructions in the attached.

- **Library Resources:** Check out some [resources \[r20.rs6.net\]](#) from the State Office of Library & Information Services available to public and private employees working remotely.
- **Talk to your supervisor about other online learning resources that may be available to you that are specific to your agency.**

As of today, there is no evidence that COVID-19 has impacted the state employee population. The Division of Human Resources [COVID-19 policy \[r20.rs6.net\]](#) and guidance are still in effect. This will help us better enable social distancing, and simultaneously offers 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.

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

The Administration will continually reassess the need to issue further restrictions. For an updated list of all HR policies and guidance, visit [www.hr.ri.gov \[r20.rs6.net\]](http://www.hr.ri.gov [r20.rs6.net]). 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.

Finally, I would like to specifically thank our colleagues at the Rhode Island Department of Health for their tireless work. I would also like to thank the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) and our cleaning crew. Many of our colleagues are working extraordinarily hard to protect us and our fellow Rhode Islanders. Take a moment to thank them this week.

Sincerely,



Brett Smiley
Director
R.I. Department of Administration