

RETURN TO WORK PROCEDURES

Interactive guide for COVID-19 Response



ST. JOSEPH COUNTY

ESTABLISHED 1830

227 W Jefferson Blvd
South Bend, IN 46601
(574)235-9547

hr@sjcindiana.com

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Return to Work Procedures

A NOTE TO ALL READERS

The information contained in these St. Joseph County Return to Work Procedures represents St. Joseph County current practices regarding the recommended operation of its locations where and when permitted by law, during this time of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The health and safety of our employees and public is our number one priority, and our hope in sharing this information is that it may be of assistance to others.

DISCLAIMER - LEGAL STATEMENT

Please be advised that some or all the information contained in this document may not be applicable to other businesses or places of work. We strongly recommend that before implementing any of the ideas contained herein you carefully evaluate and consult with outside legal counsel as appropriate the legality, applicability and potential efficacy of this information in your place of business. Please also note that this is a “living” document that may be updated at any time by St Joseph County given the fluidity of this situation. St Joseph County bears no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of or related to the adoption, or decision not to adopt, any of the practices or procedures contained in the St Joseph County Return to Work Procedures.

These Procedures are to be used as a Recommended Practice Guideline and aligns with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations to the greatest extent possible.

This is a working document and will be updated to reflect changes in directives and introduce new recommended practices as they become available.

The Return to Work Procedures provide general recommendations for use in all St. Joseph County locations. Because there may be circumstances unique to a location, there may be some cases in which your department might need to deviate from the recommendations of the procedures to address specific requirements. Such exceptions shall be authorized by Department Elected Official or Department Head. Additionally, all locations must comply with all applicable laws. If there is a conflict between the recommendations in the Return to Work Procedures and the applicable law, the facility must follow the applicable law.

Remote work will continue as the primary option for many employees, especially those 65 and older and employees who have high-risk medical conditions; however, some employees who can best perform their work in their normal worksite will be among the first to return. Your workplace leaders are responsible for determining the schedule for employees to return to office buildings and will be in contact with you directly.

The following standards are implemented to ensure a safe and healthy work environment as employees begin to return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Self-Screening Protocol

Before leaving for a work, each employee should answer the questions below. If an employee answers yes to any of the questions, they should contact their supervisor.

1. Have you had any of the following symptoms in the past 10 days – not due to any other cause diagnosed by a healthcare provider: Fever or chills; dry cough or difficulty breathing; nausea or vomiting; diarrhea; muscle or body aches; fatigue; headache; sore throat; new loss of taste or smell; congestion or runny nose?
2. Have you had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.*
3. Do you have a fever of 100 or above even if you used medication to reduce a fever?
4. Do you currently have a fever or chills, or have you had a fever or chills within the past week?
5. Have you or a member of your household received your First Positive test or COVID- 19 diagnosis in last 10days?

These questions will appear on [signs](#) at entrances and employees are not required to document their answers. If an employee answers yes to any of the questions while in an office setting, they should contact their supervisor to discuss next steps, and call their health care provider. [Other symptoms of COVID-19](#). If sick, an employee should [stay home](#).

***Housing facilities will have further guidelines**

Employees Not Presenting Symptoms: If an employee does not have symptoms, they should proceed to work as normal.

Employees Presenting Symptoms Consistent with a Known Cause:

If an employee has symptoms that correspond to a known cause (asthma, chronic sinusitis, allergies, etc.) they should proceed to work as normal unless there has been exposure to someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

Employees Presenting Symptoms Consistent with COVID-19:

If an employee has symptoms that do not correspond to a known cause (asthma, chronic sinusitis, allergies, etc.) and they have been exposed to someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, the employee should stay home and contact their supervisor and health care provider.

If at any time a health care provider confirms the cause of a fever or other symptoms is not COVID-19 and approves an employee's return to work, then the employee should return to work. Employees testing negative may return to work 48 hours after their symptoms have subsided.

Employees Tested for COVID-19:

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, they should contact their supervisor and health care provider. Employees are required to immediately report their positive test results to their supervisor and HR Director. Immediate notice is critical to adequately notifying impacted employees and ensuring CDC recommendations are followed.

Employees testing positive may return to work once:

I think or know I had COVID-19, and I had symptoms

You can be with others after:

- *At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and***
- *At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication **and***
- *Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving**Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation*

I tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms

If you continue to have no symptoms, you can be with others after:

- *10 days have passed since the date you had your positive test*

The Employee Clinic is available to all St Joseph County employees call (574) 855-1420

Leave of Absence

If an employee answers yes to any of the Self Screening questions, they should contact their supervisor. Employee should complete three self-screening questions daily. If sick [stay home](#) If absence is due to COVID-19 related reasons, the County has options of available paid leave. Contact Human Resource Department for your available options of LOA. (574)235-1815

Leave available under Families First Coronavirus Response Act. (FFCRA)
Effective April 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020

Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act- (EPSL)

Emergency Family and medical Leave Expansion Act (E-FMLA)

Face Covering Protocol

Pursuant to the St. Joseph County Health Department's [Public Health Order](#) a [face covering](#) over one's nose and mouth shall be required for any persons entering an enclosed public space or place of business, unless such persons have a medical exception indicating that a face covering is ill-advised for health reasons, or the face covering prevents the persons from delivering or receiving services. The face covering shall be worn at all times when physical distancing of at least six feet cannot be maintained.

[Signs](#) will be posted at all public entrances of buildings.

1. A facial covering shall be required while walking into the building, hallways, within offices.
2. A facial covering shall be worn until after shift change while sitting at the workstation.
3. While working independently facial coverings shall not be required.
4. A facial covering shall be required whenever employees are within 6' of another employee or member of public.
5. County has provided 3 cloth reusable mask to all employees.
6. If employees have concerns with face covering please contact Human Resource Director.

Social Distancing Protocol

Social distancing is a simple yet very effective mechanism to prevent potential infection, that relies on physical distance to avoid infection.

In practice this means:

- Staying 6 feet away from others as a normal practice
- Eliminating physical contact with others, such as handshakes with coworkers, visitors, or friends
- Avoiding touching surfaces touched by others, to the extent feasible
- Avoiding anyone who appears to be sick, or who is coughing or sneezing

This practice of social distancing includes but is not limited to common areas, entrance/exit areas of work locations, and offices. These are examples, but the principle of social distancing is universally applicable.

Note: St Joseph County will not allow any meeting of greater than 25 persons to occur until further notice, even when the meeting area is large enough to accommodate appropriate social distancing. Virtual meetings should be utilized as much as possible. Virtual meeting [request form](#).

Visitor Policies

- Before entering the building, each visitor should read the [public-facing sign](#) (also available: [Spanish version](#)) at all public entrances asking visitors to self-screen for symptoms before entering. If a visitor is experiencing symptoms, employees should help visitors understand alternative ways to obtain the service needed.
- All locations should ensure the public-facing sign is posted on all public entrances.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided to all offices for further distribution and will be available in public spaces by elevator.
- Social distancing guidelines should be maintained.
- Physical barriers such as plexiglass screens or sneeze guards will be used where available and appropriate.

Workplace Cleanliness

Employees should be disinfecting at least 2 times a day; once in the morning and in the afternoon at minimum. Make sure to include doorknobs, handles, countertops, phones, keyboards and common touchpoints in the office when disinfecting the work areas. With this being put in place housekeeping will not be coming into offices. Housekeeping will be cleaning and disinfecting bathrooms, elevators, common areas and touchpoints both day and night shifts.

- All internal doors will be propped open if it is safe to do so. This decreases the need for individuals to touch door handles and maximizes air flow in office spaces.
- Hand sanitizer will be located on each floor by elevators and have been provided to departments.
- Employees may bring their own hand sanitizer and additional cleaning supplies, if desired.
- Employees should [wash hands](#) regularly throughout the course of the workday.
- Water fountains will not be available at this time.
- Employees will be responsible for cleaning their personal desk spaces
- Establish a routine for cleaning [frequently touched surfaces](#) within department multiple times a day.
- Employees should sanitize and disinfect all areas with special attention to:
 - Tools
 - Copiers, fax machines
 - Timeclock
 - Lockers
 - Common surface areas
 - Computer screens, keyboards and phones
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 and was in their workspace 72 hours prior to taking the test, the Housekeeping Specialist shall assist in arranging a disinfecting of the space where needed. The limited impacted area should be evacuated, and employees may return to the area 48 hours once the disinfecting has been completed. As routine workplace cleaning would have been done multiple times a day.
- Cleaning will be performed in compliance with the latest CDC guidelines.

Procurement Department can assist department in locating needed supplies. (574)235-9776

Employee Assistance Program with [New Avenues 800-731-6501](tel:800-731-6501) or [574-232-2131](tel:574-232-2131)

Whether you are going into work or working from home, the COVID-19 pandemic has probably changed the way you work. Fear and anxiety about this new disease and other [strong emotions](#) can be overwhelming, and workplace stress can lead to [burnout](#). How you cope with these emotions and stress can affect your well-being, the well-being of the people you care about, your workplace, and your community. During this pandemic, it is critical that you recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and manage job stress, and know where to go if you need help. Recognize the symptoms of stress you may be experiencing.

- Feeling irritation, anger, or in denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous, or anxious
- Lacking motivation
- Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having trouble concentrating

Follow these tips to build resilience and manage stress.

- Increase your sense of control by developing a consistent daily routine when possible ideally one that is like your schedule before the pandemic.
 - Keep a regular [sleep schedule](#).
 - Take breaks from work to stretch, exercise, or check in with your supportive colleagues, coworkers, family, and friends.
 - Spend time outdoors, either being physically active or relaxing.
 - If you work from home, set a regular time to end your work for the day, if possible.
 - Practice [mindfulness techniques](#).
 - Do things you enjoy during non-work hours.
- Know [the facts](#) about COVID-19. Be informed about how to [protect yourself and others](#). Understanding the risk and sharing accurate information with people you care about can reduce stress and help you make a connection with others.
- Remind yourself that each of us has a crucial role in fighting this pandemic.
- Remind yourself that everyone is in an unusual situation with limited resources.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and mentally exhausting
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns, how you are feeling, or how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting you.
 - Connect with others through phone calls, email, text messages, mailing letters or cards, video chat, and social media.
 - Check on others. Helping others improves your sense of control, belonging, and self-esteem. Look for safe ways to offer social support to others, especially if they are showing signs of stress, such as [depression and anxiety](#).
- If you feel you may be misusing alcohol or other drugs (including prescription drugs) as a means of coping, reach out for help.
- If you are being treated for a mental health condition, continue with your treatment and be aware of any new or worsening symptoms.