

Government of Saskatchewan

COVID-19 Questions and Answers

Working from home

1. Can I let my employees work from home?

Yes. All Government of Saskatchewan ministries, agencies and Crown corporations will implement a phased-in work from home policy effective Monday, March 23, applicable to employees deemed non-essential. This means that any employees able to work from home should do so immediately, while providing managers a period to plan for work-force continuity.

2. How do I know if I can work from home?

Government services are to continue and management are to transition non-critical workers to work from home where possible, where management determines:

- If it is practical given the nature of an employee's job duties;
- The level of in-office service required to limit service disruptions for the public; and,
- If we have the technology to enable work from home.

Managers will work with employees to determine if and how they can work from home.

3. Can in-scope employees work flexible hours?

Yes. The unions and management have agreed to allow flexibility for in-scope employees' hours of work. Upon mutual agreement between a manager and employee, an employee may be allowed to adjust their start and stop times throughout the day, to facilitate working at home where operationally possible. For example, an office worker who typically works 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. may work sporadically throughout the day, before 8 a.m. and after 5 p.m. to balance childcare and get their eight hours in.

Employees must continue to put in their usual number of hours.

Arrangements must be approved by the manager and meet operational needs.

Employees will not be paid shift differential or weekend premium on these flexible hours.

Daily overtime must still be approved by the manager.

4. If an in-scope employee is working flexible hours, what do they enter on their timecard?

B2 employees (Permanent Full-time) only enter exceptions on their timecard (i.e. vacation, sick leave) and can continue to enter their time as they always have.

B1 employees (Permanent Part-time, Term, Labour Service) record all time of their timecard and should continue to enter their regular hours on their timecard (i.e. 8:00 to 12:00 and 13:00 to 17:00). Do not enter the flexible hours you are working or you will activate additional shift differential and weekend premium timecodes.

5. If I can't work from home, but am unable to come to work because of child or dependent care, what are my options?

Employees may request pressing necessity and/or family leave up to the limits in those policies if they have credits available. Then vacation, banked time or SDOs may be requested. When other entitlements are exhausted, employees may use sick leave. When sick leave is exhausted employees would use leave without pay or request a leave of absence.

6. I have specialized equipment in my office. Can I take it home?

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Employees should consult with their manager if they have specific equipment in their office that they need when working from home (i.e. braille reader). Decisions on equipment will be made on a case-by-case basis. The goal is to ensure the health and safety of employees while minimizing cost. Equipment required for a medical accommodation would be prioritized. Managers should contact their HR Business Partner for guidance.

Self-isolation/sick leave

7. How do employees know if they should self-isolate?

Effective March 13, any government employees who are currently travelling internationally (including to the U.S.) will be required to self-isolate for 14 days after returning to Canada as a precaution. If they have or develop acute respiratory or flu-like symptoms, they should contact HealthLine 811.

8. If an employee returned to Canada from another country within the last 14 days, do they need to self-isolate?

Yes. If they have already returned to Canada in the two weeks prior to March 13, they need to self-isolate. For example, if you returned to **Canada on March 10, and returned to work, you need to now self-isolate until your 14 days are passed, or March 24.**

9. When employees are required to self-isolate in accordance with public health guidelines, will they be paid?

Yes. If arrangements can be made to [work from home](#), employees may work from home with permission from their manager. If working from home isn't possible, then employees may access sick leave credits whether or not they are showing symptoms of illness.

10. My child's school/daycare has closed or my private sitting arrangements have changed. Can I take time off?

Employees would be expected to make alternate arrangements if possible. Employees who are able to work from home may work from home with the permission of their manager. Employees may request pressing necessity and/or family leave up to the limits in those policies if they have credits available. Otherwise, vacation, banked time, SDOs may be requested. **When other entitlements are exhausted, employees may use sick leave. When sick leave is exhausted employees would use leave without pay.**

11. What if employees who are required to self-isolate in accordance with public health guidelines don't have sick leave credits available?

Employees may request other forms of paid leave, e.g. vacation, banked time, SDOs. Employees may also draw on future sick leave credits. Employment Insurance has waived the waiting period; exploring EI is also an option.

12. Can an employee draw on future sick leave credits if they have no sick leave available?

Yes. Collective agreements and *The Public Service Regulations, 1999* allow for the employer to approve drawing up to a maximum of 30 days. Managers should consider requests on a case-by-case basis in consultation with their HR Business Partner Team. Employees should be aware that any advances limit available future sick leave, and if they leave employment, the overdrawn

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amounts will be collected back from their pay. Employment Insurance has waived the waiting period; exploring EI is also an option.

13. What if an employee refuses to stay home even though it's known they should be self-isolating in accordance with public health guidelines?

The Province has directed mandatory self-isolation for people who have travelled internationally, have been in close contact or are living with someone who has tested positive or themselves who have tested positive. Managers should also call the Public Healthline 811 to report the situation.

14. What if an employee comes to work exhibiting symptoms of illness?

If an employee is exhibiting obvious signs of illness, they can be directed to go home, either to work from home, or on approved sick leave if sick leave credits are available. The employee should also be advised to contact their health provider's office.

15. What if an employee is not required to self-isolate but refuses to come to work?

Employees who are able to work from home may work from home with the permission of their manager. Unless on approved sick leave, vacation, family leave, etc., employees should be directed to attend work. If they still refuse, the manager should contact their HR Business Partner Team for advice.

16. What should a manager do if they suspect an employee is falsely stating they must self-isolate?

To ensure we are not burdening the healthcare system, managers should not ask for medical documentation related to COVID-19 unless they believe it's necessary in a particular situation. If this is the case, contact your HR Business Partner for guidance. Managers may ask for proof of travel if necessary.

17. If an employee knowingly travels outside Canada and now needs to self-isolate, will they still be allowed access to sick leave?

Yes. If arrangements cannot be made to work from home, employees will still have access to sick leave.

18. If an employee on vacation is quarantined and is unable to return home, will they be allowed to access sick leave?

Yes.

19. If an employee on vacation is not quarantined but cannot get home due to flight availability or other reasons, will they be allowed to access sick leave or pressing necessity?

No. They may request and be approved additional vacation leave, banked time, or SDO. If no additional paid time credits are available, their time away will be leave without pay.

20. If an employee needs to be away from work to care for a family member who is self-isolating or has COVID-19, will they be paid?

If the contact with a family member also requires the employee to self-isolate in accordance with public health guidelines, sick leave can be approved. Employees who are able to work from

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home may work from home with the permission of their manager. In other circumstances, pressing necessity and family leave provisions may apply or access to vacation, banked time etc. can be approved. **When other entitlements are exhausted, employees may use sick leave. When sick leave is exhausted employees would use leave without pay.**

21. How do I handle an employee who has a compromised immune system and is concerned for their health?

Employees who are able to work from home may work from home with the permission of their manager. If the employee cannot come to work due to a medical concern, they should work with their manager and HR Business Partner through the Be At Work's medical accommodation process.

22. If I have a family member who has a compromised immune system and I am concerned about bringing home COVID-19, can I stay home from work?

Employees who are able to work from home may work from home with the permission of their manager. Households should use standard protocols to reduce the risk of transmitting illnesses.

Workplace

23. An employee is afraid to come to work because of personal health circumstances. How should managers respond?

Employees who are able to work from home may work from home with the permission of their manager. If not possible, other scenarios will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and advice should be sought from the HR Business Partner.

24. If a significant portion of employees are sick or on self-isolation and it is impacting operations of the workplace and shutting down operations is not an option. How do I keep operations going?

Managers should discuss with their ministry Emergency Planning Officer.

25. If an employee deemed essential is providing work in an area with exposure, or potential exposure to the virus, what personal protective equipment do I provide?

Under OHS legislation, protective equipment needs to be provided. Managers can contact their HR Business Partner for advice.

26. If an employee contracts the COVID-19 virus at work is it a WCB claim?

If exposure is suspected to have occurred during authorized work duties, e.g. front line care giver, the employee should contact their health care provider's office for advice.

27. If an employee is self-isolating, do we notify other employees?

Practice discretion in maintaining confidentiality. Public Health will advise contacts who need to know.

28. If I think an employee has been in contact with someone with COVID-19 who is not self-isolating, what should I do?

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Practice discretion in maintaining confidentiality. Public health will notify people who have been in contact with someone who has tested positive and they will be required to go into mandatory self-isolation.

29. If an employee is being tested, do we notify other employees?

Practice

30. If an employee's vacation is cancelled, can vacation be carried over?

The Permanent Head has the discretion to approve vacation carryover requests.

31. Can employees be re-assigned other duties?

Where operational considerations warrant, employees may be assigned other duties.

32. If assigned other duties, how will employees be compensated?

If the assignment is at a higher level, the appropriate provisions for TAHD or Out-of-Scope temporary substitution apply. If the assignment is a lower level, the employee will continue to be paid their regular salary.

33. Collective agreement provisions state that with medical substantiation, when an employee's vacation is interrupted for two days or more, or when exceptional circumstances incapacitate an employee prior to or during vacation leave, sick leave may be substituted for vacation leave.

- **Can this provision be used when an employee is not showing symptoms but has to self-isolate in accordance with public health guidelines?**
- **Do they need medical documentation or will this be waived?**

For in-scope employees: Required self-isolation will be considered an exceptional circumstance for which vacation leave may be changed to sick leave. **In order not to burden the health-care system at this time, the requirement for medical documentation may be waived.**

34. If the ministry shuts down an office, will employees be paid?

Yes. Permanent full-time employees will continue to be paid; the employer does not have short-term layoff provisions. Permanent part-time and term employees work as assigned by management with no guarantee of work. (Note: CUPE perm part-time do work guaranteed hours.) Check with your HR Business Partner regarding notice provisions for part-time and term staff if required. Term positions can be ended early with the required notice.

Out-of-Scope

35. Out-of-Scope employees are required to use vacation/SDO entitlements and reduce their outstanding entitlement balance to 15 days. With recent events, are employees still required to meet these limits?

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Employees are expected to meet the entitlement limits. However, if an OOS employee's vacation/SDO had to be interrupted as a result of the pandemic (cancelled or required to work) OR was required to use sick leave due to illness, then the perm head can authorize carryover in excess of the limit.

36. Will Out-of-Scope employees be paid overtime if required to work additional hours as a result of the pandemic?

Yes, as per the Public Service Regulations (Section 44) and HR Policy 1201, the Chair of the Public Service Commission can authorize the payment of overtime to out-of-scope employees who are required to work additional hours in exceptional circumstances. The Chair of the PSC has authorized overtime for out-of-scope staff under the following conditions:

- All overtime must be authorized by the permanent head.
- Overtime will be paid out as per out-of-scope compensation policies.
- Overtime should be coded appropriately on an employee's timecard and a note indicating the overtime is related to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

37. An email was sent to M1 employees that timecards are required to be submitted by March 24, 2020 for year-end processing. Is this timeline still applicable?

Yes, there is no intention to adjust year-end processes or timecard deadlines. Timecards can be entered and approved in [PSC Client](#) through any internet-connected device.

Employee Programs and Services

38. Is there any mental health information I can use to help manage the emotional impact of COVID-19?

These [resources](#) are from Morneau Shepell, our Employee and Family Assistance provider. Share this information with employees, co-workers and family.

39. Can I still access the Employee and Family Assistance Program?

Yes. It's important that we also make our mental health a priority right now. Contact [EFAP](#) if you need support. EFAP is still offering in-person counselling in certain locations, but this may change soon. If this changes, the following support will be in place:

- New callers who need 1:1 counselling will be offered video or telephone support.
- For those already in face-to-face counselling, their counsellors will reach out to offer them alternatives (e.g., telephone).
- The same will apply to those in one of our targeted programs.