

BULLOCH COUNTY POLICY FOR COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Effective August 17, 2021

Introduction:

Bulloch County strives to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees. This policy addresses our ongoing response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, and the recent surge in new cases of infection. The policy outlines the County's efforts to safeguard employees' health and well-being while preserving our ability to maintain essential operations and continue providing essential services to our citizens.

Contagious Symptoms and Contagious Condition

Employees should take steps to reduce the risk of contracting a contagious condition or passing on a contagious condition by observing healthy practices. Those practices may include, but are not limited to: handwashing, social distancing, cleaning/sanitizing, avoiding crowds, wearing masks, and/or obtaining vaccination. (Employees are encouraged to speak with their personal physicians and/or look to reputable sources, such as the CDC, for guidance.)

In the interest of maintaining a safe and healthy workplace, the County may prohibit employees with Contagious Symptoms and/or a Contagious Condition from reporting to work and/or may send employees with Contagious Symptoms and/or a Contagious Condition home.

(a) Contagious Symptoms and/or Condition Defined

For the purposes of this policy, Contagious Symptoms and/or a Contagious Condition exist when any of the following occur:

- (1) An employee exhibits symptoms that are, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and/or the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), known symptoms of COVID-19 infection. These symptoms include, as of the effective date of this policy:
 - Fever (100.4°F or feeling feverish); chills
 - Cough; sore throat
 - Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
 - Muscle pain; headache; body aches
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Fatigue
 - Nausea; vomiting; diarrhea
 - Congestion; runny nose
- (2) An employee is diagnosed with a COVID-19 infection;
- (3) A member of the employee's household is diagnosed with a COVID-19 infection;

- (4) An employee is notified of an exposure to a COVID-19 positive person;
- (5) Any other risk factors are present for which the CDC recommends isolation or quarantine of the employee.

(b) Workplace Requirements

An employee with Contagious Symptoms and/or a Contagious Condition:

- (1) Will not report to the workplace so as not to infect others.
- (2) Will notify the Human Resources Department of the illness or exposure.
- (3) Will not return to the workplace until cleared by the HR Department.
- (4) May be sent home, with or without the opportunity to work from home, based on a Contagious Condition or reports or observations of Contagious Symptoms.

(c) Absence Due to Contagious Symptoms and/or Conditions

An employee who has been sent home by the County and/or has not reported to work due to Contagious Symptoms and/or a Contagious Condition, or who has been quarantined, will be required to use, if available, accrued Sick Leave or Annual Leave. If paid leave is unavailable, the employee will be recorded as absent with approved unpaid leave. Any prolonged absences will be addressed in compliance with all federal and state laws and regulations, including ADA and FMLA (where a serious health condition is involved).

The County may, but is not required to, approve an employee to work from home while recuperating or while under quarantine. Such approval is dependent upon consideration of multiple factors, including the employee's position, the severity of the illness, and other safety and logistical considerations.

For any employee subject to absence due to Contagious Symptoms or a Contagious Condition, HR will evaluate whether the absence qualifies for Family and Medical Leave (FMLA). In such case, the policy covering FMLA shall apply.

(d) Special Sick and Annual Leave Provisions

Due to the unusual nature of the pandemic, the County is authorizing a temporary change in leave usage for full-time employees who accrue leave. In addition to the normal reasons for sick leave, employees may also use accrued sick leave for:

- periods of quarantine, as recommended by a health care provider or CDC, due to known or suspected COVID-19 exposure;
- to provide necessary supervision or care for a quarantined dependent;
- to care for a child whose school or daycare has closed due to COVID-19; and
- for periods of closures of County workplaces related to COVID-19 when the employee is unauthorized or unable to work or telework. (However, an employee who is unable to work for periods of closure of a County workplace will be required to use all available annual leave before using any sick leave.)

Unless otherwise required by law or provided under this policy, an employee's use of paid leave will be subject to all provisions of the Bulloch County Personnel Manual, including but not limited to operational and staffing needs.

(e) Return to Work from Contagious Symptoms or Contagious Condition

An employee seeking to return to work following a COVID-19 related absence must make a request to Human Resources (by phone or electronically). HR shall review and must approve the request *before* the employee may return to work. The HR Department will utilize CDC and/or DPH Guidelines, as well as internal practices, to determine the minimum absence length. At the discretion of the County, a written physician's release may also be required. An employee failing to obtain return to work authorization prior to reporting to work will be immediately sent home and may be subject to disciplinary action for failure to comply with this requirement.

(f) Compliance

Due to the potentially serious ramifications of non-compliance, any violation of this policy (including, but not limited to, failing to report COVID-related illness/exposure and deliberately making false reports of illness/exposure) will subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

(g) Scope of Policy and Administration

Other than the leave provisions in Sections (d), this policy applies to all employees, volunteers, interns, and any other individuals performing services on the County's behalf, whether paid or unpaid. This policy will be administered in accordance with all federal and state laws and regulations, including, if applicable, the ADA and the FMLA, and any other applicable federal or state law. Any conflicts between this policy and federal/state law will be resolved in favor of the latter. Interpretation and application of this policy may be adjusted as CDC and Georgia DPH guidance changes.

(h) Effective Date; Expiration; Effect On Other Policies

This policy shall be effective as of August 17, 2021 and shall expire on December 31, 2021. This policy replaces the previous Interim Policy for COVID-19 Pandemic that expired on June 30, 2021. This policy does not repeal or replace any other Bulloch County policies that have been approved by the Bulloch County Board of Commissioners and that are now in effect, including without limitation the Bulloch County Personnel Policy Manual. However, where there is a conflict between the provisions of this policy and any other policy, the provisions of this policy shall prevail and be applicable until the expiration of this policy.