



**COVID-19
Policies & Guidelines
Updated July 12, 2021**

TRAVEL

- 1. Can my department require that I provide information about my recent travel to countries considered to be high-risk for exposure to the coronavirus or ask for medical clearance upon my return from traveling?**

Employers can request but not demand that you inform them if you are planning or have traveled to countries considered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be high-risk areas for exposure to the COVID-19.

Additionally, obtaining a medical clearance is currently not part of the CDC guidelines and therefore not required by the County. However, the County reserves the right to request that you remain off the worksite as an added precaution if the CDC recommends a quarantine after your travel. Absent the County's request to remain off the worksite, you may return to work after your travel as long as you are not experiencing symptoms.

However, CDC travel guidance does differentiate between vaccinated and non-vaccinated travelers. Continue to review the CDC guidelines along with local, state and applicable international travel restrictions before traveling as these may be stricter than the guidance provided by the CDC. [CDC Travel Guidelines](#)

- 2. Can my department restrict my personal travel to all locations under a CDC travel advisory?**

No. An employer cannot restrict personal travel. However, the use of vacation still requires the approval of your department head.

- 3. Can I refuse to travel on County business, if required to perform my job duties?**

Under the Federal OSHA, you can only refuse to work when a realistic threat is present. The County's Public Health Department website has updates on their local COVID-19 status, or visit the [CDC](#) website for additional travel guidance. Nonetheless, if you have concerns regarding traveling for business and fear of catching COVID-19, try to work out an amicable resolution with your department.



REPORTING TO WORK

4. Do I have to comply with the County's screening protocols before entering a County building?

Yes. The County possesses the authority to screen employees for COVID-19 symptoms before entering a County worksite or facility. You must comply with all screening protocols before entering a County worksite.

The County has implemented both symptom and temperature screenings at all County facilities. For your safety, the screening process uses a non-contact thermometer.

Employees who do not pass the screening process will be asked to return home and contact their Supervisor. Please refer to question 8 below for additional guidance.

As a reminder, certain County facilities still require face coverings, regardless of vaccination status. Please follow posted signs at each county facility. These County facilities include:

- Healthcare settings (including long-term care facilities).
- State and local correctional facilities and detention centers.
- Public Transit
- Indoors in K-12 schools, childcare and other youth settings.
- Homeless shelters, emergency shelters and cooling centers.

5. If I call in sick, can my department ask me questions regarding my symptoms?

Yes, but the inquiry must be limited. Although your department cannot ask you regarding your medical diagnosis, they can ask you if you have symptoms similar to those of COVID-19. This information is necessary to ensure the County maintains a safe and healthy working environment for our employees.

6. Can my department ask me to leave work and go home if I am showing symptoms of a communicable illness?

Yes, your department may ask you to go home if you are showing signs of a communicable disease. Given the current heightened concerns regarding COVID-19 and due to County's obligation under the California Occupational Safety and Health Act ("Cal-OSHA") to maintain safe and healthy work conditions for employees, you may be sent home.

7. What if I believe it is just a cold or allergies?

An employer cannot be reasonably expected to medically distinguish the difference between symptoms of allergies, common cold, flu or other non-serious conditions from COVID-19. It is the County's responsibility under Cal-OSHA to provide safe and healthy work conditions.



To this end, the County must in a consistent manner, apply the same standard to all employees who are symptomatic and you may be sent home.

8. If I am sent home, what is my pay status after being sent home?

You may use your accruals or your new Supplemental Paid Sick Leave-SB95. The County Executive Officer is directing Department Heads to allow the use of any accruals and in any order without the need to follow any prerequisites (such as pre-approval for the use of vacation) but only to cover any COVID-19 related leaves. However, this does not include waiving County Ordinance 3.08.230 (B) regarding the use of vacation during your initial probationary period.

Please review the updated COVID Leave Guide available online for more details on the Supplemental Paid Sick Leave-SB95. Should you not have accrued leave balances to use or should deplete them while you are out sick, please contact Human Resources. Beginning January 1, 2021, departments may begin to enforce their attendance policies for non-COVID-19 related leaves.

9. Can I be asked to perform duties outside my regular assignment during an emergency?

All County employees by the nature of their employment are classified as disaster service workers. You may be called upon to perform duties other than your regular assignments to aid County emergency efforts.

10. Can I refuse to assist in the disinfecting of my work area as recommended by the CDC?

If you are being provided with the appropriate equipment and instructions and doing such cleaning has no known increase risk, your department has the right to request that the work be done.

11. What if I want to take personal preventative measures at work to feel safer?

Your department cannot prevent you from taking other personal preventive measures as long as they do not disrupt operations or create safety hazards. However, we recommend that before considering the additional measures to take, you first review the recommendations by the CDC including:

- Washing your hands frequently and thoroughly (including the top, bottom, between fingers and thumbs, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (cough or sneeze into your elbow if a tissue is not available – never into your hands).
- Not touching your face.



- Practicing good hygiene such as disinfecting common surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, and smartphones regularly.

12. What if I have a medical condition or disability that requires that I take additional precautions at work?

The County will review all requests for a reasonable accommodation through our usual ADA process. Contact Human Resources for additional guidance or complete the Accommodation Request Form found on our website.

13. Are we allowed to host potlucks in our department?

No. The CDC considers congregating around food service areas a possible risk. The CDC further recommends avoiding the use of self-service food or drink options.

Therefore, due to the posed risk surrounding potlucks and the fact that there are still social distancing requirements for unvaccinated employees while eating in the workplace, potlucks are not allowed.

As an alternative, pre-packaged boxes or bags may be provided for employees to take to their respective eating areas.

14. Do I have to wear a face covering while at work?

Unvaccinated Employees: Face coverings continue to be **required** at all times while working indoors for **unvaccinated individuals**. There is an exception for employees that are working in an office or in a room alone. However, this exception does not apply to staff that is working in a cubicle area, even if there is a divider between individuals.

Additional exceptions include employees that are in a car alone, eating or drinking (while maintaining 6 feet distancing from others), and employees that are outdoors (maintaining at least 6 feet distancing from others).

The County has face coverings available for all employees upon request through your department and/or supervisor. Your face covering must be clean and undamaged. Your supervisor may ask you to replace your face covering if it does not meet these requirements. If this happens, your supervisor must provide you a new face covering to use.

Vaccinated Employees: The County has adopted a Vaccination Status Certification Program in accordance to updated guidelines from California Department of Public Health. This program allows fully vaccinated employees the option to not wear a face covering at work. To participate in the program please review and complete the Vaccine Status Certification Form available via the County's intranet site. **Participation is voluntary, even for fully vaccinated employees.** However, if you choose not to participate in the program, the County must treat you as unvaccinated when applying Cal-OSHA safety standards.



15. If I am fully vaccinated, do I ever have to wear face coverings while at work?

Yes, in limited settings required by federal, state or local rules. There are some settings identified where face coverings are required for everyone, regardless of vaccination status, including:

- Healthcare settings (including long-term care facilities).
- State and local correctional facilities and detention centers.
- On public transit (airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, subways, buses, taxis, and ride-shares) and in transportation hubs (airport, bus terminal, marina, train station, seaport or other port, subway station, or any other area that provides transportation).
- Indoors in K-12 schools, childcare and other youth settings.
- Homeless shelters, emergency shelters and cooling centers.
- Specific County Departments who have additional safety protocols.
- You elect not to participate in the County's Vaccination Status Certification Program.
- During an outbreak in your workplace.

16. Do I have to wear a face covering in hallways?

Unvaccinated Employees: Yes, you are required to wear a face covering if you have not been fully vaccinated. (Must continue to maintain 6 feet distancing from others).

Vaccinated Employees: If you have been approved for the Vaccination Status Certification Program, wearing a mask in the hallways is optional. Absent an approval, you must wear a face covering in hallways.

17. I'm fully vaccinated, can I still wear a face covering?

Yes, participation in the County's Vaccination Status Certification Program is voluntary. You may continue to wear a face covering even if fully vaccinated.

18. My department is having me share a vehicle, is that allowed?

Yes, your department may require that you share a vehicle. However, unvaccinated employees must wear a face covering while in the vehicle. Additionally, unvaccinated employees may request that their department provide them with a respirator to use while sharing a vehicle.

19. My breakroom is now open, are there any restrictions for using it?

Unvaccinated employees must continue to social distance (at least 6 feet) while eating. There are no restrictions for vaccinated employees.



20. What if I have a disability that prevents me from using a face covering?

The County will evaluate all situations where a medical or mental health condition or disability prevents you from wearing a face covering. You may be required to submit information from your health care provider to determine alternatives to a face covering. Contact Human Resources for additional guidance or complete the Accommodation Request Form found on our website.

21. I'm fully vaccinated but I don't want to disclose my vaccination status, must I still wear a face covering?

As per the most current Cal-OSHA requirements, employers must document vaccination status to make face coverings optional at the workplace.

Therefore, although you have the right to decline sharing your vaccination status, unless you satisfy the requirements under the County's Vaccination Status Certification Program, we must treat you as unvaccinated and you must continue to wear a face covering.

As reminder, the program is being administered by Human Resources directly. Therefore, your department will not receive a copy of your vaccination record, only confirmation that you have been approved to participate in the County's Vaccination Status Certification Program.

22. I was not wearing a face covering and my department asked me if I was approved for the Vaccination Status Certification Program. Can they do that?

Yes, your department is required to adhere to Cal-OSHA guidance, including confirming that you are exempt from wearing a face covering. As a reminder, Cal-OSHA only allows for "documented" vaccinated employees to be without a face covering. Without confirmation that you have been approved for the Vaccination Status Certification Program, you must be treated as unvaccinated and be required to wear a mask.

Nonetheless, the inquiry should be limited to your participation in the Vaccination Status Certification Program.

23. How do I report COVID-19 exposures and possible hazards at the workplace?

If you believe a co-worker is experiencing symptoms, makes statements that they have been exposed or you believe they are exposing you to COVID-19, notify your supervisor. We ask that you do so discretely in an effort not to invade the privacy of your co-worker.

If you have specific recommendations in reducing COVID-19 hazards, please submit them in writing to your supervisor for review and consideration.

Your supervisor will evaluate the situation and determine the appropriate action based on



County policies and CDC guidelines.

24. Does the County’s health plan cover COVID-19 testing?

Yes, your Blue Shield medical plan offers regular COVID-19 testing. Please review your health plan for applicable costs sharing details. When visiting a test provider, provide them with your Blue Shield insurance card for coverage confirmation.

25. Do I have to notify the County if I have been in close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual?

Yes, but only if it meets the definition of close contact. To assist you in determining if you are a close contact, the CDC has provided the following guidance:

An individual is considered to be in close contact of a COVID positive person if, forty-eight (48) hours before the symptoms began and until the COVID Positive Person is no longer required to be isolated, the individual:

- 1. Were within six (6) feet of a COVID-19 Positive Person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes: or more over a twenty-four (24) hour period; OR*
- 2. Had unprotected contact with the body fluids and/or secretions (including but not limited to being coughed on or sneezed on, sharing utensils, or drinking out of the same container) of a COVID-19 Positive Person.*

If you meet the definition of close contact, you may be under self-quarantine. Please review the County’s Local Health Order for exemptions, including for fully vaccinated employees and those that have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past. The following are some examples:

Fully vaccinated employees and without symptoms do not need to be tested or quarantine after close contacts with COVID-19 cases unless you have symptoms. You may return to work as customary. You will not need a release from a doctor.

Employees who have previously tested positive for COVID-19, and have subsequently recovered within the preceding three (3) months prior to exposure to a COVID Positive Person shall not be required to quarantine, as long as they do not subsequently develop COVID-19 symptoms within the 14-day exposure period.

Review the COVID-19 Leave Guide for instructions on requesting time off to self-quarantine. Please review the Return to Work section in this document for the County’s policy on returning to the worksite after your self-quarantine ends.

26. Do I have to notify the County if I am seeking a COVID-19 test?

Yes. It is the County’s policy that employees that are seeking a COVID-19 test



remain off the worksite. This applies even if the test is part of any pre-surgery requirement or other medical procedure.

Review the COVID-19 Leave Guide for instructions on requesting time off for COVID-19 testing.

NOTE: If your department requires that you test as part of your job (i.e. to visit clients in a hospital), you may continue to work pending COVID-19 test results.

27. I tested positive for COVID-19? What do I do?

You must notify your department that you tested positive for COVID-19. Notify your department within a reasonable time after receiving the diagnosis. Your department will notify the County's COVID Response Team. Please review the section below for additional details on the County's next steps, including the notice you will receive from Human Resources with important information on your rights.

Review the COVID-19 Leave Guide for instructions on requesting time off after testing positive. For guidance on returning to work, review the Return to Work section found in this document.

28. Is telecommuting still available in lieu of COVID-19 quarantine or isolation leaves?

If your department has returned to entirely in-person work, telecommuting is no longer an alternative if you have been placed on quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19 concerns. You may be eligible for paid time off under state and/or federal law. Please review the COVID-19 Leave Guide for additional information.

RESPONDING TO COVID-19 DIAGNOSIS

29. What is the County's process for responding to an employee testing positive for COVID-19?

When the County receives a notification that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, Public Health will reach out to the employee and complete a "contact" form. The "contact" form will have specific questions to determine if any co-workers were potentially exposed (as defined below) to COVID-19. Information gathered includes the day and time the employee was last at a County building, the date of the positive test and the first date the employee had symptoms (if applicable).

The employee that tested positive for COVID-19 will receive a notice from Human Resources with information on their rights. This will include guidance on any workers compensation benefits that may apply if the COVID-19 diagnosis is determined to be work related.



An employee is considered to be potentially exposed if, within 48 hours before the symptoms began, you:

a. Were within six (6) feet of a COVID positive person for a cumulative total of fifteen (15) minutes; or more over a twenty-four (24) hour period; Or

b. Had unprotected contact with the body fluids and/or secretions (including but not limited to being coughed on or sneezed on, sharing utensils, or drinking out of the same container) of a COVID positive person.

As a final step, the County will sanitize the work areas where the COVID-19 positive employee worked. It may be necessary that the building be closed to allow for the sanitation to take place. If there is a need to close your building, you will be sent home with pay for the remainder of the day.

30. How will I know if I have been potentially exposed?

Upon completing the contact form, Public Health will determine the potential exposures. Within one (1) business day, Human Resources, via your department, will send an exposure notice. The notice will include any benefits that may be available under federal, state and local laws and/or self-quarantine guidance if applicable. As per updated Public Health orders, not all exposures are required to self-quarantine.

Beginning in December 2020, workplace exposures will be given the option to seek COVID-19 testing during working hours. You may do so by coordinating the time off with your supervisor.

If you do not receive a notice from Human Resources, you should continue to report to work as usual.

31. What instructions will I receive if I have been determined to be “potentially exposed” by Public Health?

The notice from Human Resources will include instructions on testing options (during working hours), self-monitoring guidance and any applicable return to work guidance. Every notice is different, as the self-monitor dates will vary depending on the last date you had close contact with the COVID-19 positive employee.

We recommend that you carefully review the notice you will receive from Human Resources, as it will include important information on your options. As a reminder, the County will grant you a paid leave of absence if you are required to self-quarantine due to the exposure.

32. What if I am not considered a potential exposure but still want to get tested for COVID-19?



The County cannot prevent you from seeking a COVID-19 test. However, the County requires that employees seeking a diagnosis remain off the worksite. Review the COVID-19 Leave Guide for instructions on requesting time off for COVID-19 testing.

Review the Return to Work section (below) for guidance on returning to the worksite after seeking COVID-19 testing.

33. How will I know if my building/department was sanitized?

To ensure that all employees receive notice, the cleaning company will place a flyer at the building/department entrance. The notice will most likely read “Pathogen Disinfection”. The County has contracted with MYLO Corporate Maintenance and Janitorial Services for disinfecting services. Their scope of work includes applying an appropriate EPA registered COVID19 disinfecting product and procedure for all touchpoints at the facility. Such work is performed according to CDC standards.

The disinfecting process will occur after all employees have exited the building. In addition, since the disinfecting usually occurs after regular business hours, your department may ask you to return to the workplace as early as the next morning.

34. What other sanitation measures has the County taken?

In addition to the above sanitation process, the County has identified regularly touched surfaces (i.e. doors, elevators, staircases) and has staff assigned to clean and disinfect them. Such cleaning occurs throughout the day on regular scheduled workdays.

Hand sanitizers have been placed throughout the County buildings and within individual departments. If your department does not have these resources available, please report this to your supervisor.

35. I received a notice regarding an outbreak at my department/division? What does this mean?

COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS) CCR Title 8, Division 1, Chapter 4 3205.1 require that the County track COVID-19 positive cases by department/division. An outbreak is defined as three (3) or more COVID-19 positive cases within 14 days. COVID-19 positive cases where the employee has been telecommuting and not present at your department/division do not count towards an outbreak.

Upon identifying an outbreak, the County will notify your department and will make COVID-19 testing available for employees that were physically at that department/division during the last 14 days. A second test will be conducted a week after.

COVID-19 testing will be available at no cost to the employees within the exposed group, during employees’ paid time, except for the following:

- Employees who were not present at the workplace during the relevant 14-day period(s).



- Employees who were fully vaccinated who do not have COVID-19 symptoms.
- For COVID-19 cases who did not develop COVID-19 symptoms after returning to work, no testing is required for 90 days after the initial onset of COVID-19 symptoms or, for COVID-19 cases who never developed symptoms, 90 days after the first positive test.

The County will be making the determination of who does not require a test.

RETURN TO WORK GUIDANCE

36. I was sent home due to COVID-19 symptoms. When can I return to work? Will I be asked for a doctor's note?

If you have not been diagnosed with COVID-19, you may return to work once you are asymptomatic without the need for a doctor's note. If you wish to return to work while you are still symptomatic, you must seek medical certification from your treating physician noting that the symptoms are non-communicable.

As an example, if you have a cough, you may return to work without a doctor's note when you are no longer coughing. However, if you wish to come back and still have a cough, you may do so but after being cleared by a treating physician that your symptoms are non-communicable.

If you are seeking COVID-19 testing or you have tested positive for COVID-19, please refer to questions below for return to work guidance.

37. My COVID-19 test came back negative. When can I return to work?

If you are not under self-quarantine or experiencing any symptoms, you may return to work upon submitting confirmation that you tested negative.

38. An individual that resides with me has tested positive for COVID-19. When can I return to the worksite?

It is the County's policy that employees in self-quarantine due to a household exposure should remain off the worksite for the entire length of their self-quarantine period in accordance with the latest Imperial County Public Health Order. You may return to work upon your notification to your department that you have completed your quarantine. You will not need a release from a doctor.

Fully vaccinated employees without symptoms do not need to be tested or quarantine after close contacts with COVID-19 cases unless you have symptoms. You may return to work as customary. You will not need a release from a doctor.



Employees who have previously tested positive for COVID-19, and have subsequently recovered within the preceding three (3) months prior to exposure to a COVID Positive Person shall not be required to quarantine, as long as they do not subsequently develop COVID-19 symptoms within the 14-day exposure period.

If you develop symptoms, please stay home and inform your Supervisor.

39. I have been in close contact with an individual outside my residence that tested positive for COVID-19. When can I return to the worksite?

It is the County's policy that employees in self-quarantine due to an outside household exposure should remain off the worksite for the entire length of their self-quarantine period in accordance with the latest Imperial County Public Health Order. You may return to work upon your notification to your department that you have completed your quarantine. You will not need a release from a doctor.

Fully vaccinated employees without symptoms do not need to be tested or quarantine after close contacts with COVID-19 cases unless you have symptoms. You may return to work as customary. You will not need a release from a doctor.

Employees who have previously tested positive for COVID-19, and have subsequently recovered within the preceding three (3) months prior to exposure to a COVID Positive Person shall not be required to quarantine, as long as they do not subsequently develop COVID-19 symptoms within the 14-day exposure period.

If you develop symptoms, please stay home and inform your Supervisor.

40. I tested positive for COVID-19. When can I return to work?

In order to return to work, you will need a doctor's release and sign a Return to Work acknowledgement. The County does not require that you test negative before returning to work. As a reminder, self-isolation orders are subject to change by Public Health in accordance to CDC guidelines. The County will adapt to these changes and will reflect them in the Return to Work acknowledgement.

You may submit a release from a provider in Mexico. However, the County will also require that you obtain a release from a U.S. provider. This is at no cost to you.

If you are not under the care of a doctor, the County will arrange for you to receive a release from the County's medical provider. This is at no cost to you.