



## EMPLOYEE FAQs ON REOPENING CITY OFFICES

As the City of Chicago moves into the Bridge Phase and toward Phase 5 re-opening, it welcomes all City employees back to the workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic has and continues to pose challenges throughout our City and the world. Without the daily monumental effort of the City workforce, particularly those essential workers who reported to work each day throughout the pandemic, these challenges would have been insurmountable. The City thanks all employees for their continued dedication to excellence in public service.

Employee health has come to the forefront of many discussions, both in the workplace and nationwide. The City endeavors to continue promoting its employees' health as an integral part in the phased re-opening. This includes making the COVID-19 vaccines available to all City employees and providing up to two (2) hours of paid time for employees receiving their vaccines during their scheduled work time. In an effort to provide guidance and information to employees, the City has prepared a series of Frequently Asked Questions regarding the return to the office, vaccines, health and safety measures, and the phased reopening.

### RETURNING TO THE OFFICE

#### What does Phase 5 re-opening mean?

Phase 5 re-opening means that the City has moved into a Phase where all businesses are open, non-vulnerable individuals can resume working, and most activities can resume with health safety measures in place.

#### Who is coming back to the office as we move into the Bridge Phase and toward Phase 5?

Now that a large portion of Chicago adults have had access to the COVID-19 vaccine, the City is moving to fully re-open City offices and functions in accordance with public health guidelines.

#### Will I be allowed to telework during the Bridge Phase and/or Phase 5?

Effective May 24, 2021, all employees who are working remotely pursuant to the City's temporary telework policy are expected to return to working at least four (4) full workdays per week in-person. The exact dates each employee will be expected to work in-person will be determined by the employee's Department and will be based on operational needs in conjunction with CDC and CDPH recommendations. City offices are expected to fully reopen on June 28, which means all employees who do not have an approved reasonable accommodation approved by the Department of Human Resources will be required to be in the office five (5) days per week.

Employees with underlying health conditions who are unable to be vaccinated may apply for a reasonable accommodation to continue teleworking. Additionally, employees who have children in full-time or hybrid eLearning situations may request to telework up to three (3) days per week when their children are eLearning and require an adult to be present.



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### What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will I be provided when I return to work?

In general, PPE such as face shields are not required to return to work in an office setting. PPE will be provided if your job or specific tasks require it. Face coverings will continue to be required in shared settings in City workspaces and common areas of City buildings where social distancing measures cannot be met. Employees are responsible for obtaining their own face coverings.

### If I have an underlying health condition, do I need to return to work?

Reasonable accommodations will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with your department and the Department of Human Resources. You should contact your department's HR Liaison to discuss your options and to obtain the necessary paperwork.

### How frequently are workspaces being cleaned and disinfected? What are the updated cleaning protocols?

- High touch surfaces in common areas of workspaces are currently cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis.
- Please see the [Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocol for Departments Policy](#) and [City Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Protocol](#) on the City's Intranet. AIS updated these policies in April 2021 in partnership with CDPH to ensure that all updated sanitary guidance is followed. These policies reflect what the public health and scientific community has learned about how COVID spreads and how to mitigate risk.
- There may be variations in buildings not managed and cleaned by AIS custodial staff and vendors.
- Personal workspace cleanliness and disinfection are the responsibility of the employee.

### Can I safely use copy machines, file cabinets, and shared office equipment?

Yes. Employees should, however, wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after using any shared equipment and avoid touching their face until they have done so.

### Will there be required face-to-face meetings or large group meetings?

Face-to-face meetings will continue to be discouraged at this time unless absolutely necessary; conference calls or videoconferencing options should be utilized whenever possible. If a face-to-face meeting is deemed necessary, employees must wear face coverings and always adhere to capacity limits and social distancing requirements and the duration of the meeting should be limited.

### Will I have to submit to a temperature or symptom screening each day before I start work?

Recent [reporting](#) and medical studies have shown temperature and symptom screenings are less effective against the spread of COVID-19 than previously thought. In fact, the CDC stopped requiring health screenings for international travelers arriving in U.S. airports in September 2020, because "symptom-based screening has limited effectiveness because people with COVID-19 may have no symptoms or fever at the time of screening, or only mild symptoms." Due to their limited effectiveness, temperature and symptom screenings will not be required during this time.



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Nevertheless, by entering a city building/facility an employee certifies that he or she does not have a temperature above 100.4F, is not experiencing any COVID-related symptoms and is in compliance with the City's and CDC's travel advisories. This certification language is posted in various locations near building entry points. Employees who cannot make these certifications should stay home and inform your department HR liaison. See also page 7, Health: What should I do if I am showing symptoms of the virus?

### What is being done to ensure that HVAC systems are cleaned and optimized?

AIS facility engineers are following CDC guidelines for HVAC systems which include the following:

- Increasing outdoor air ventilation.
- Disabling demand-controlled ventilation.
- Further opening minimum outdoor air dampers to reduce or eliminate re-circulation.
- Improving central air filtration to the highest compatible filter and sealing the edges of the filters to limit bypass.
- Checking filters to ensure they are within service life and are appropriately installed.
- Keeping HVAC systems running longer to enhance air exchanges in the building spaces.

### Can I work a flexible schedule to reduce my exposure in an office setting?

Modified work schedules and staggered shifts may be implemented to reduce the number of employees in the workplace. Your Department Head will determine when this is appropriate. Flexible schedules may only be implemented if they do not adversely impact department operations or your ability to perform work tasks. All employees must work five (5) full days per week; employees may not, for example, work four (4) days per week even if they meet the minimum work hour requirements per day (typically 7 hours or 8 hours, depending on title). Any schedule/shift changes must be preapproved by the Department Head or a deputy; if the employee is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, notification must also be provided to the union.

### What if my children's school or daycare provider is closed/on hybrid eLearning and I have no one else to take care of my children?

Employees who have signed a telework agreement and who are in positions where they can feasibly telework and have children in full-time or hybrid eLearning situations may request to telework up to three (3) days per week when their children are eLearning and require an adult to be present. It is important for you to talk to your manager or HR Liaison as soon as possible about your options, given your specific position and duties. You can also talk to your manager about the possibility of a flexible work schedule. If you cannot work or telework, then you may be eligible certain types of leave, take available accrued vacation time, or apply for an unpaid continuous Personal Business Leave. If you need assistance finding childcare, please visit the [Illinois Action for Children's website](#) and [referral form](#).

The [Chicago Early Learning website](#) is an additional resource for parents looking early learning programs across the city. The Fall Enrollment for Chicago Early Learning is now open for every 3–4-year-old in the city. Children who will be 3 and 4 by September 1, 2021, are eligible to apply for a Chicago Early Learning program at one of the 600+ CPS or community-based preschools in Chicago.



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### Who do I contact if I have employment related questions regarding the COVID-19 virus?

You should contact your manager, your department's HR Liaison, or COVID Safety Officer.

## SOCIAL DISTANCING AND OTHER SAFETY MEASURES

### Will social distancing be required in the workplace?

Yes, employees are required to adhere to social distancing measures whenever possible. In instances where social distancing cannot be maintained, face coverings are required. Additionally, each department has designated a COVID-19 Safety Officer who is responsible for ensuring that social distancing measures are being observed, and to investigate complaints about failure to maintain social distancing or other health safety measures in the workplace. Both vaccinated and unvaccinated employees are required to adhere to social distancing and face covering requirements.

### Should we wear face coverings even if we are sitting at our desks, whether in cubicles or offices, and no one is within 6 feet?

Face coverings are still required anytime social distancing cannot be maintained. Face coverings may be removed when you are alone or if no one is within six feet of you. If someone approaches you to talk, you should both put your face covering on if you cannot maintain six feet of distance. You should also limit those interactions to a cumulative 15 minutes or less throughout the day.

### Does the 6' social distancing recommendation stand if my workspace is a cubicle and I am separated by my co-worker with a cubicle wall? Do I need to wear a mask all day if I work in a cubicle or open workspace?

This will depend on the exact configuration of the cubicles. AIS has conducted facility assessments and specific guidance for your workspace was provided to your department. You should contact your department's COVID-19 Safety Officer for questions about your workspace.

### If I have been fully vaccinated, do I need to wear a mask?

Yes, per CDPH and [CDC guidance](#). At this time, even fully vaccinated employees must wear a mask anytime they are in common areas, like hallways, elevators, restrooms, lunchrooms, etc., or whenever social distancing cannot be maintained because the vaccination status of other people is likely unknown. Though vaccination is highly effective at preventing infection with COVID-19, it is not 100% effective, therefore it is safest for everyone to continue wearing a face covering in public or shared spaces.

### Is wearing gloves recommended?

With appropriate hand hygiene, gloves are generally not necessary in work settings unless cleaning or taking care of someone who is sick.

What is recommended is to clean hands frequently, using soap and water or hand sanitizer after touching shared objects and before touching your face, before eating, after going to the restroom, and after sneezing, coughing, or blowing your nose into a tissue.



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### **What do I do if I see a colleague or member of the public not wearing a mask or socially distancing?**

You can politely remind colleagues and customers to observe social distancing or other health safety measures, such as wearing face coverings, when they are in the workplace. However, if the colleague or customer refuses, you should not confront them but bring the matter to the attention of a supervisor or your department's COVID-19 Safety Officer. To find out who your COVID-19 Safety Officer is, please follow up with your department leadership.

### **Will there be a special protocol for using elevators so as to maintain social distance?**

Elevators have been designated with capacity limits and/or floor markings to indicate where people should stand while riding the elevator. Face coverings are required for anybody using elevators.

### **Can the virus be transmitted through sharing documents?**

- There is minimal risk of transmitting the virus by sharing documents.
- Proper hand hygiene is recommended. Clean your hands frequently and consider sanitizing your hands between customer interactions.
- Do not touch your face unless you have cleaned your hands.
- Clean your hands before eating and drinking, after going to the restroom, and after you have blown your nose, coughed, or sneezed into a tissue.

### **How safe are restrooms that are shared by employees and/or members of the public?**

Restrooms are “high touch” areas that are cleaned at least once daily, consistent with [CDC guidance](#). Since restrooms are “common areas,” employees are required to wear masks when walking to/from and while using restrooms.

### **Are public water fountains safe to use?**

Public water fountains are safe to use. However, you should practice proper hand hygiene after touching the buttons/handles and do not touch the spout. Water fountain buttons/handles are cleaned/disinfected like other high-touch surfaces. We encourage employees to bring their own water in order to minimize or eliminate the need for touching water fountains.

### **How should we conduct ourselves in breakrooms for lunch? Can refrigerators be shared? Microwaves? Can we/should we eat or take breaks with co-workers?**

- Clean hands frequently, especially after touching high-touch surfaces/shared objects.
- Refrigerators and microwaves may be shared but you should clean your hands after touching handles/buttons and before eating.
- You may eat and take breaks with others but occupancy levels and seating configurations in break rooms should be altered to ensure you and your colleagues are 6 feet or more apart at all times. Since face coverings must be removed to eat, there is an increased risk by eating with colleagues; if possible, consider eating outside or in an area where more than 6 feet of distancing can be maintained.



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### VACCINATIONS

#### **What does it mean to be fully vaccinated?**

Fully vaccinated means that you have received either your single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine or both doses of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine AND two weeks have passed since your final dose was administered.

#### **If I have been fully vaccinated, what are my risks if I am working with other employees who have not been vaccinated? What are the risks to my family members who haven't been vaccinated?**

Being fully vaccinated means you have good protection from COVID-19, however you are not 100% protected. You should continue to follow current public health guidance including social distancing and masking to be at the lowest risk of getting COVID-19.

#### **Will I be told if other employees have or have not been vaccinated?**

No. Because of privacy laws, we are unable to disclose the vaccination status of other employees in the workplace.

#### **Can I ask my coworkers if they have been vaccinated?**

No. While your coworkers may voluntarily disclose their vaccination status, in order to respect their privacy, you should not ask them whether or not they have been vaccinated.

#### **Are employees required to be vaccinated before returning to work?**

At this time, vaccination is not mandatory for employees. However, employees are encouraged to get vaccinated unless there are medical or religious reasons for not doing so.

#### **What if I am unable to be vaccinated due to an underlying health condition, will I be required to return to the office?**

You should contact your department's HR Liaison, Disability Liaison, or the City's Disability Officer at the Department of Human Resources to discuss your options for a reasonable accommodation. Contact information for the Disability Officer is included at the end of this document.

#### **I am still deciding whether to get vaccinated and want more information. Where can I go to learn more information?**

For information about available vaccines, visit [chicago.gov/covidvax](https://chicago.gov/covidvax) or discuss with your healthcare provider.

#### **I do not have a regular healthcare provider. Where can I find one?**

If you are covered by the City's health insurance, call 1-800-772-6895 (PPO), 1-800-730-8504 (HMO), or visit [bcbsil.com/cityofchicago/](https://bcbsil.com/cityofchicago/) to find local providers accepting new patients.



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For additional resources, please visit:

[https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/health\\_services/svcs/find\\_a\\_communityhealthcenter.html](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/health_services/svcs/find_a_communityhealthcenter.html)

### HEALTH

#### **What should I do if I am showing symptoms of the virus?**

Minimizing the spread of the virus is critical. If you are experiencing symptoms, do not report to work and contact your healthcare provider. You should also contact your manager or department's HR Liaison. This applies to people with COVID-19 symptoms whether you are fully vaccinated, partially vaccinated, or unvaccinated. If you have COVID-19 or are exhibiting COVID-19-like symptoms, you will not have to use your own benefit time while you have the virus or are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms. All employees that test positive for COVID-19 are required to immediately report the diagnosis to their HR Liaison or COVID Safety Officer and provide regular updates.

#### **If another employee is displaying symptoms of being sick what is the protocol for removing them from the workspace?**

If you observe that someone in the workplace is exhibiting symptoms of being sick, you should immediately notify a supervisor, your department's HR Liaison, or COVID Safety Officer. Employees who are exhibiting symptoms of any illness will be sent home.

#### **What if a member of my family has a compromised immune system or underlying health condition?**

You should discuss your particular situation with your department's HR Liaison. They will be able to go over your options with you.

#### **As an employee, if I am feeling anxious or troubled by the uncertainty that exists, where do I get assistance?**

The City's Employee Assistance Program offers professional mental health services at no cost to employees on an individual and confidential basis. These services cover a wide range of personal concerns, including stress, anxiety, grief, substance abuse, and family conflict, as well as referral to financial counseling resources. More information can be found here on the City's intranet, by calling 312-744-9711, or by emailing [DHREAP@cityofchicago.org](mailto:DHREAP@cityofchicago.org).

#### **What will be the protocol when a staff member tests positive for COVID? Will co-workers be notified? Will the location have to be closed for cleaning and sanitizing?**

First and foremost, the staff member that tests positive must immediately notify their COVID-19 Safety Officer or supervisor. Any time an employee who has been in the workplace tests positive for COVID-19, the City will provide a notification to employees who share the same worksite with that employee. For employees who are identified as having had close contact with the employee who tested positive, whether or not they have to quarantine will depend on their vaccination status. Employees who have been fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine unless they begin to exhibit



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symptoms of COVID-19. Employees who have not been fully vaccinated will need to quarantine for at least ten (10) days from the date of the last known contact with employee who tested positive for COVID-19.

AIS has implemented enhanced cleaning protocols for [facilities](#) and [vehicles](#) when an employee has reported that they have tested positive for COVID-19. There may be variations in buildings not managed and cleaned by AIS custodial staff and vendors.

## COMMUTING AND TRAVEL

### What are the best practices to ensure a safe commute to work on public transportation?

- Socially distance whenever possible.
- Wear a face covering.
- Do not touch your face.
- Clean hands after taking public transportation.
- For further information, visit [transitchicago.com/coronavirus/](https://transitchicago.com/coronavirus/)

**Are City and pool vehicles safe to use?** Yes, please see the [City of Chicago Vehicle Cleaning Protocol](#).

### Can I use my personal vehicle instead of a City vehicle to travel between sites for meetings? Will I get reimbursed for mileage?

You may use your own vehicle so long as you have insurance that has specifically indemnified the City of Chicago. Mileage reimbursement is not payable for the voluntary use of your own vehicle.

### If I have traveled out of state or abroad, what precautions must I take before returning to work?

Employees who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine after traveling out of state or abroad unless they begin to develop symptoms of COVID-19. Employees who have not been fully vaccinated are required to comply with any mandated travel-related quarantine that is in place at the time of their return.

## SICK LEAVE POLICIES AND OTHER LEAVES

### If I get COVID-19, will I have to use my own benefit time?

No. The City adopted a Sick Leave Policy Addendum which applies to all employees except for sworn members of the Chicago Police Department and uniformed members of the Chicago Fire Department, who are covered by their own leave policies. Under the Sick Leave Policy Addendum, an employee who has COVID-19 will not need to use their own benefit time.





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### **If I have to quarantine because I was in close contact with someone else who has COVID-19, will I need to use my own benefit time?**

Employees who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine if they had close contact with someone else who has COVID-19 unless they exhibit symptoms. Otherwise, under the Sick Leave Policy Addendum, employees who are required to quarantine because they were in close contact with someone who had COVID-19 will not have to use their own benefit time to cover the 10-day quarantine period.

### **My family member has COVID, do I need to use my sick leave to take care of them?**

Yes, you will need to utilize your own benefit time in order to care for a family member who has COVID-19. If you do not have sufficient benefit time, you may take an unpaid leave of absence. You should discuss our options with your department's HR Liaison.

### **Is the COVID-19 virus an FMLA qualifying condition and will I be able to use FMLA Leave?**

FMLA Leave may be available in relation to your illness or the illness of a qualifying family member as the result of contracting COVID. Please contact your department's HR Liaison for details and any required paperwork.

## CONTACT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

### **What resources are available for more information?**

[The City of Chicago Coronavirus Response Center](#)  
[Centers for Disease Control Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### **Disability Office**

City of Chicago Department of Human Resources  
121 N. LaSalle Street, Room 1100  
Chicago, IL 60602  
Phone: (312) 744-4969  
TTY: (312) 744-5035  
Fax: (312) 744-9710  
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