

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Return to Work (RTW)

Why am I being asked to return to the workplace?

Governor Abbott announced he is repealing the statewide mask mandate and allowing all businesses to fully operate at 100% capacity beginning March 10th. As we've done since the beginning, the City will comply with the Governor's orders. Effective March 10, we will expand our face-to-face programs and services while we continue to follow our COVID protocols to protect the health and safety of Team Plano members.

Every person matters in Team Plano and every job has purpose. A significant challenge of the pandemic has been balancing our need to keep team members safe, while also fulfilling the responsibility of serving the public. We have implemented several new measures, from adjusting on-site staffing to new cleaning protocols that will keep you safer inside our facilities.

The thought of returning to the workplace may be causing some concern, but we are here to support you. Our goal is to collaboratively ensure you feel safe and secure so together we can navigate the complexities of our "new normal" while actively serving the public.

What is the organization doing to ensure my safety while in the workplace?

Our primary concern is creating a safe environment for our employees and for the public. Therefore, you'll notice various changes including more staggered shifts and limits on the number of staff who are on-site at one time, frequent sanitizing of common areas, hand sanitizing stations, access to masks/face coverings and access to cleaning supplies such as disinfectant wipes, aerosol and surface cleaners for your personal work spaces.

Additionally, the City is providing all employees with two cloth face masks. Employees are required to wear face masks/cloth coverings during working hours whenever interacting with others in work spaces where they are unable to maintain a minimum of 6-foot social distance. Face masks/cloth coverings are also required in public spaces such as hallways, break rooms and bathrooms.

Will employees have to have their temperatures taken while in the workplace?

Temperature checks may be required at the discretion of the department director. If temperature checks are required, employees who refuse to comply with temperature checks may be sent home from work without pay and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. *Exclusions may be granted due to religious belief or health reasons. Contact Human Resources for more information.*

What if I desire to only telecommute to avoid contact with others at work?

In the spirit of social distancing, the City has developed rotational scheduling. Therefore, employees who are not ill or under quarantine are expected to be present when requested by their supervisor. Failure to return to the workplace when requested (without prior notification/authorization) will constitute job abandonment.

NOTE: exceptions may be made for those impacted by school/daycare closure and those with medical conditions. Employees with medical conditions and/or those at higher risk for complications are encouraged to contact HR Compliance Administrator [Mark Stephens](#) to confidentially discuss options based on a qualifying medical condition.

What if I choose not to come to the workplace when I am scheduled to be onsite?

Employees who are not ill or under quarantine are expected to be present when requested by their supervisor. Employees who have been requested to return to the workplace and choose not to do so are ineligible to use personal leave, but may elect to take leave without pay. Employees who elect this option, may be called back to the workplace if the need arises. Failure to return when requested (without prior notification/authorization) is job abandonment.

Employees electing to go on **leave without pay** status understand that the City may eliminate their position based on business need without prior notice. This potential elimination of position is distinct from the “layoff” process provided under Policy 214, Section 210 (D) of the HR Policies and Procedures. By electing to be in **leave without pay** status, the employee understands and acknowledges that they are voluntarily relinquishing their position if/when notified by the City. Employees interested in this option must complete the Voluntary Leave Without Pay form.

NOTE: Exceptions may be made for those impacted by school/daycare closure and those with medical conditions. Employees with medical conditions and those at higher risk for complications are encouraged to contact HR Compliance Administrator [Mark Stephens](#) to confidentially discuss their options.

What if I engage with a customer who elects not to wear a mask?

While external customers are not required to wear masks within City facilities, we will place signs that strongly encourage face masks and maintaining social distancing protocols. Employees are encouraged to provide services from an appropriate distance or via a virtual setting, but we will not deny service to our customers.

Employees who are concerned about engaging with customers who elect not to wear a mask may request a KN95 mask from their supervisor. KN95 masks are used in hospitals. Per the City’s Medical Director, properly wearing a KN95 minimizes the risk of being exposed to COVID.

COVID-19 Vaccine

Is the organization requiring employees to receive the vaccine?

No, the City is not requiring employees to receive the COVID vaccine.

How is the City assisting employees in gaining access to the vaccine?

The City is in discussions with a local healthcare provider to coordinate a vaccination program for our employees. Additional information about this opportunity will be released when the healthcare provider’s vaccine supply becomes available.

In the meantime, employees are encouraged to contact their primary health care provider and local pharmacy to inquire about vaccine availability. Employees are also encouraged to add their names to available waitlists. Please visit [Texas Department of State Health Services provider map](#) for more information.

If I received the vaccine, do you have to provide documentation to the City?

Generally speaking, non-public safety employees do not have to provide proof of vaccination. However, Risk Management may request verification as depicted in the City’s [exposure](#) guide.

If I received the vaccine, do I still have to wear a mask?

Yes. The CDC continues to recommend wearing a mask even if a vaccine has been received. It is important to continue using all tools available to help stop the spread of the pandemic. Researchers continue to study whether getting a COVID-19 vaccine will prevent you from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19, even if you don’t get sick from it yourself. We will continue to revisit this matter as more research becomes available and CDC guidance is updated.

School/Daycare Matters

My child attends school virtually or is under quarantine. Now what?

To promote social distancing, employees whose school aged children are impacted by school/daycare closure, quarantines and/or those who partake in virtual educational sessions can take their personal leave or can telecommute (i.e. work from home). See the City's Temporary Telecommuting Policy for additional information.

If an employee's child whose school or place of care is closed, or childcare provider is unavailable for COVID-19 reasons, can more than one guardian take paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave simultaneously to care for their child?

Generally, an employee does not need to take such leave if a co-parent, co-guardian or your usual childcare provider is available to provide the care your child needs.

What are my responsibilities if I am allowed to telework from home?

Teleworking employees must comply with the performance and conduct standards for their position. Teleworking employees must comply with the equipment, software and remote access standards that have been established by the Technology Services department.

The number of hours worked by the employee will not change due of telework. All employees authorized to telework are required to enter their hours worked into their PeopleSoft timesheet. Teleworking employees must check in with their supervisors every day and be prepared to meet the expectations, work output, communication and schedules as identified by their supervisor.

See the City's [Temporary Telecommuting Policy](#) for additional information

COVID-19 Illness & Absences

What should I do if I am experiencing COVID-19 symptoms?

If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, tightness of chest, shortness of breath), seek the advice of a medical professional. You can call Catalyst's free 24/7 COVID-19 information line at 214-964-0319 to speak with a clinical professional. They will tell you whether you should get tested or self-quarantine. They are doing COVID-19 testing at the Legacy Medical Village location. There are a limited number of tests, so Catalyst will not recommend someone get testing without going through the physician assessment.

Click on COVID-19 box for more information: catalysthealthnetwork.com/coronavirus

Employees who are generally ill (non-COVID-19 related) are asked to remain at home until they are fever/symptom-free for at least 72 hours without medication. Employees must provide a release-to-work document completed by a medical provider before returning. Supervisors will also accept notes from telemedicine providers like Doctors on Demand.

What if I need to care for a family member who has symptoms of COVID-19 or who was diagnosed with COVID-19?

Employees absent from work to care for a family member should contact Human Resources to determine eligibility for FMLA and time-off will be in accordance with City of Plano [Policy 212-Medical Leave](#). If the employee is not eligible for FMLA, the employee may be permitted to use available personal leave (sick, vacation, compensatory time) in accordance with City of Plano [Policy 210-Leave](#).

If I have a COVID-19 related absence, do I have to only use sick leave?

Yes, the City's traditional leave policies will be followed for COVID related absences. See [Policy 210](#) for additional information.

Employees who have exhausted their sick leave may apply for an advancement loan of up to 80 hours of sick leave in accordance with the City's [Sick Leave Loan Program](#).

I just started with Plano and I don't have accrued leave or medical benefits yet. What happens if I am diagnosed with COVID-19 or exhibit similar symptoms?

Employees who are ill are asked to remain home until they are fever/symptom free for at least 72 hours. Employees who do not have available leave will be addressed on a case by case basis as determined by the City Manager's Office and Human Resources.

Employees who have exhausted their sick leave may apply for an advancement loan of up to 80 hours of sick leave in accordance with the [City's Sick Leave Loan Program](#).

What if I am placed under quarantine or get COVID-19?

If you are **diagnosed** with COVID-19 that is work-related, you are to contact Risk Management and follow the process depicted in the City's [Exposure Guide](#).

Can the City of Plano require employees to be tested if they show symptoms in the workplace?

To the extent possible, the City of Plano will not require employees to be tested. It is strongly recommended that employees do not make assumptions about health conditions as the symptoms can mirror a variety of other conditions (basic flu, cold, allergies, etc.). The City of Plano reserves the right to send employees home due to observable physical symptoms.

What if I come in contact with someone at work who has COVID-19?

In the event that an employee comes into contact with someone at work who has COVID-19, the City's [COVID-19 Exposure Guide](#) will be followed.

What if an employee who works in my office is diagnosed with COVID-19?

Once put on notice, the City will conduct a risk assessment and provide guidance in accordance to the steps set forth in the [COVID-19 Exposure Guidelines](#).

For questions or concerns, please talk to your supervisor or director. You can also email questions to covidcomms@plano.gov.

What if I desire to work from home to avoid contact with others?

Employees who are not ill nor under quarantine are expected to be present during working hours when requested by their supervisor. However, the City encourages employees to minimize in-person meetings and instead conduct meetings via Skype (i.e. teleconferencing) in an effort to reduce one-on-one exposure.

What if I choose not to come to work?

Employees who are not ill nor under quarantine are expected to be present during working hours when requested by their supervisor. However, the City encourages employees to minimize in-person meetings and instead conduct meetings via Skype (i.e. teleconferencing) in an effort to reduce one-on-one exposure.

My doctor has told me I have a high risk of complications from COVID-19 due to an underlying medical condition. Do I have to come to work?

Employees who are at higher risk for complications due to COVID-19 are encouraged to contact their health provider at the first signs of illness for advice. Employees at higher risk for complications, especially those in positions designated under the City's Essential Governmental Functions during a potential outbreak, are encouraged to contact [Mark Stephens](#), HR compliance administrator, to confidentially discuss their options based on a qualifying medical condition.

Illness Prevention

How does COVID-19 spread?

According to the CDC, COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person, especially between people who have been in close contact, or within 6 feet, of each other. An infected person with or without symptoms may spread the virus to others. When an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes, droplets from their mouth can spread through the air and land in the mouths or noses of nearby people or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Please visit the [CDC's website](#) for additional information.

Can the City of Plano prohibit employees' travel?

The City of Plano is not able to ban employees' personal travel. Employees who travel abroad are encouraged to quarantine in accordance to the CDC. Please contact Risk Management for additional information

Must I wear a mask at work?

Yes. All City of Plano employees, volunteers and contractors are required to wear face masks/cloth coverings during working hours whenever interacting with others in work spaces (i.e. city facilities, vehicles and outdoor spaces) where they are unable to maintain a minimum of 6-foot social distance. Face masks/cloth coverings are also required in public spaces such as hallways, break rooms and bathrooms.

The City of Plano will provide various face masks/coverings in accordance with the scope and nature of the employee's position as depicted below:

- All employees will receive two cloth face mask/coverings regardless of position
- N95 masks are to be provided to first responders (i.e. Public Safety)
- KN95 and surgical masks will be available to employees who cannot socially distance

This mask requirement will be revisited once vaccines are readily available to the public.

Please note: Social distancing of 6 feet or more is still important, even with a face covering.

Please refer to the Mandatory Use of Cloth Face Covering protocol, found at www.teamplano.us/covid19

What if I don't want to wear a face mask/covering at work?

The expectation is that employees will wear face masks/cloth coverings as depicted above and in accordance with the Mandatory Use of Cloth Face Covering protocol.

Employees who refuse to comply with this policy will be sent home from work without pay and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Exceptions may be granted due to religious belief or health reasons. Contact Mark Stephens, Human Resources Compliance Administrator, at (972) 941-7410 for more information.

Should we host our internal meetings and events?

Meetings should be conducted by teleconferencing via Skype or Zoom. Internal celebrations or gatherings should adhere to our COVID safety protocols and must be approved by the Department Director.

Am I allowed to attend offsite conferences and trainings?

Traveling for conferences are currently on hold until vaccines are more readily available. Please consider attending virtual events. Exceptions may be made on a case by case basis.

What if I feel anxious about COVID-19?

Practice illness prevention. This means staying home when you feel sick, washing your hands often and effectively, covering a cough or sneeze with your elbow and seeking medical care when necessary.

Cleaning

What are our cleaning procedures during times like these?

The City invested in an initiative to establish sound cleaning and safety protocols by certifying our COVID protocols for our different types of facilities with an outside provider, Bureau Veritas. Periodic audits will be conducted by EHS to reinforce the importance of compliance.

- We have increased our frequency of cleaning public areas. In addition, our custodial contractor has implemented a Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pre-contamination protocol.
- City staff and the custodial contractor have purchased EPA approved COVID-19 disinfectant cleaning chemicals and are following EPA guidance for cleaning procedures as it emerges.
- Custodians are cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces in the workplace nightly, focusing on common gathering areas (e.g., door handles, light switches, stair rails, elevator buttons, phones, microwaves, coffee stations, sink handles, water fountains, chair arms, shared workstations or learning materials, dining tables). Lobby areas are cleaned twice daily.
- Cleaning products are provided to each department for cleaning of personal spaces.
- During flu season, the custodial contractor began to increase areas cleaned and started using a germicide cleaner approved for flu.

Additional information regarding the City's sanitation guidelines can be found [here](#).