



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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March 5, 2021

**TO:** HR Directors, General Government & Higher Education Institutions

**FROM:** Franklin Plaistowe, Assistant Director   
State Human Resources

**RE: COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION LEAVE WORKFORCE GUIDELINES**

**Purpose**

On February 29, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee issued proclamation 20-05 declaring a State of Emergency exists in all counties in the state of Washington as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19. Our Governor further declared that State agencies and departments are directed to use state resources and to do everything reasonably possible to assist affected political subdivisions in an effort to respond to and recover from the outbreak. The outbreak of COVID-19 throughout the world, United States and Washington State significantly impacts the life and health of our people, as well as the economy of Washington State, and is a public disaster that affects life, health, property and the public peace.

As a result of continued worldwide spread of COVID-19 and its significant progression in Washington State, Governor Jay Inslee issued several amendatory proclamations. On May 31, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee issued proclamation 20-25.4 (*"Safe Start – Stay Healthy" County-By-County Phased Reopening*). On July 7, 2020, an extension of the *Safe Start – Stay Healthy* order, proclamation 20-25.6 was issued because of the ongoing present threat and dangerous upward spread of COVID-19. On January 11, 2021, proclamation 20-25.12, *Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery* was issued, noting that a state of emergency continues to exist in our state.

The State of Washington has a phased approach to vaccine distribution. Some state employees will be included in the list of employees eligible to receive the vaccine during earlier phases of distribution. The state is not requiring the vaccine for public employees; rather, it is voluntary. However, the state has an interest in reducing the spread of COVID-19 in state workplaces for

the protection of employees and the public we serve. Therefore, the following workforce guidelines address how state employers can remove barriers to encourage employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine by providing reasonable leave to employees to travel for and receive the vaccine when it is not provided at the workplace. Leave is provided only during the employee's scheduled work time, and employees using leave to travel and receive the vaccine will not be reimbursed for mileage or other expenses. Whether the leave time for this purpose is treated as time worked for calculating overtime is dependent on agency policy, WAC, and/or the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Our primary goal is to keep our employees and customers safe and healthy while we continue the work of government and minimize the spread of COVID-19. This workforce guidance is effective immediately and supplements the March 10, 2020, COVID-19 Workforce Guidelines. There is no expectation that state organizations retroactively apply this guidance. This information is applicable to general government agencies but higher education institutions, boards and commissions, and agencies led by separately elected officials are encouraged to follow these guidelines.

#### **Leave for COVID-19 immunization**

- General government agencies must permit employees to take a reasonable amount of leave with pay for the employee to travel and receive each dose of COVID-19 immunization if the vaccine is not offered at the workplace. Leave in excess of one day may be authorized in extraordinary circumstances, such as to accommodate travel where the vaccine is unavailable locally. The employer may require that the request for leave be supported by documentation, which may include proof of the vaccination. This policy guidance is effective until the expiration of proclamation 20-05, issued February 29, 2020, by the Governor and declaring an emergency in the state of Washington, or any amendment thereto, whichever is later. If state or federal law otherwise provides paid leave specifically to receive the COVID-19 vaccination, this provision no longer applies.

#### **Agencies offering COVID-19 immunization at the workplace**

- Employers offering the COVID-19 immunization (vaccine) at the workplace are not required to provide paid leave for employees to receive the vaccine, even if the workplace where the vaccine is offered is not the employee's regular work site. However, employers offering the vaccine at the workplace *may* provide reasonable leave with pay to travel and receive the vaccine.
- Employers offering vaccine at the workplace *may* allow, but are not required to allow, employees to receive the vaccine on work time.

#### **Review of Policy**

The State reserves the right to modify the policy in order to ensure that the components of this policy advance appropriate public health policy, are not duplicative of benefits available under state or federal law, and are not disruptive to the operations of government. This entire policy shall be reviewed no later than thirty (30) days from its issuance.