

**Partnership for Children of Cumberland County, Inc.**  
**Human Resources Policies and Procedures**

**General Employment Policies**

**Section 110 – Communicable Disease Emergency**

**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to outline provisions to protect the workplace in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. It is the Partnership's goal during any such time period to strive to operate effectively and ensure that all essential services are continuously provided and that employees are safe within the workplace.

**2. Definitions**

- a. Communicable Disease – Any disease transmitted from one person or animal to another by direct contact with an affected individual or the individual's discharges or by indirect means. Sometimes quarantine is required to prevent the spread of disease.
- b. Epidemic – A disease occurring suddenly in a community, region or country in numbers clearly in excess of normal. This includes the occurrence of several cases of disease associated with a common source.
- c. Pandemic – The worldwide outbreak of a serious communicable disease in numbers clearly in excess of normal.
- d. Incubation period – The time, usually in days, between exposure to an illness and the onset of symptoms.
- e. Isolation – Restriction of movement and/or action of individuals infected with a communicable disease to reduce the chance of spreading disease.
- f. Quarantine – Restriction of movement and/or action of individuals who are known to have been exposed to or may reasonably be suspected to have been exposed to a communicable disease and who do not yet show signs or symptoms of infection.
- g. Mandatory Employees – Employees with permanent, probationary, time-limited or trainee appointments who are required to work during a public health emergency because their positions have been designated by the Partnership as mandatory to operations during an emergency.
- h. Emergency Layoff - An emergency layoff is a temporary separation from payroll because funds are not available, work is not available or because of another emergency situation requiring employees to remain away from the worksite. The employer believes that the condition will change and intends to recall the employees as soon as feasible.

**3. Scope**

- a. The President of the United States, State Health Director or the Governor has authority to declare a public health emergency. In the absence of such an order, the Partnership's President shall consult with local/State Public Health officials to determine the severity of the individual situation and to determine what actions shall be taken (including closure of the Partnership's offices). Factors which may be considered include:

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- 1) Disease severity (i.e., hospitalization and death rates) in the community;
  - 2) Extent of disease (number of people who are sick) in the community;
  - 3) Amount of worker absenteeism at the Partnership;
  - 4) Impact of disease on workforce populations that are vulnerable and at higher risk (e.g., pregnant women, employees with certain chronic medical conditions that put them at increased risk for complications of influenza); and
  - 5) Other factors that may affect employees' ability to get to work, such as school dismissals or closures due to high levels of illness in children
- b. Management shall inform employees and employee shall inform management of any evidence of a communicable disease that could seriously endanger the health of others in the workplace.
- c. In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, employees will be required to stay away from the workplace until symptoms are gone.

**4. Preventing the Spread of Infection in the Workplace**

- a. The Partnership will ensure a clean workplace, including the regular cleaning of objects and areas that are frequently used, such as bathrooms, break rooms, conference rooms, door handles and railings. Leadership, Facilities, and HR will monitor and coordinate events around an infectious disease outbreak, as well as to create work rules that could be implemented to promote safety through infection control.
- b. We ask all employees to cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of infectious disease in the workplace. The best strategy remains the most obvious—frequent hand washing with warm, soapy water; covering your mouth whenever you sneeze or cough; and discarding used tissues in wastebaskets. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers have been installed throughout the workplace and in common areas.
- c. Unless otherwise notified, our normal attendance and leave policies will remain in place. Individuals who believe they may face particular challenges reporting to work during an infectious disease outbreak should consult with their supervisors to develop any necessary contingency plans, including alternative sources of child care, a temporary telecommuting arrangement, and/or an alternative work schedule.
- d. All employees will self-screen for temperature and symptoms before arrival to work using the online screening form provided. A touchless forehead thermometer will be available at the Partnership to screen staff who did not self-screen prior to arrival. Submitted screenings will be maintained as a private medical record. An employee who has a fever at or above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit will be sent home.

**5. Social Distancing**

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, the Partnership may implement these social distancing guidelines to minimize the spread of the disease among the staff.

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- a. Reducing face-to-face exposure by using conference calls and email;
- b. Avoiding unnecessary travel;
- c. Cancelling meetings, workshops, training sessions and scheduled events;
- d. Implementing ad-hoc telecommuting arrangements
- e. Establishing flexible working hours;
- f. Installing protective barriers between work stations or increasing space between workers;
- g. Reinforcing hand washing and requiring the use of protective equipment such as hand sanitizers and masks (provided by the Partnership);
- h. Scheduling employees in shifts; and
- i. Controlling access to the Partnership's offices.

**6. Mandatory Personnel**

- a. The president and the board chair will designate mandatory personnel if necessary. With a teleworking-capable workforce, in most cases, the Partnership can transition to temporary remote work during a public health emergency without need of mandatory personnel.

**7. Staying Home When Ill**

- a. We provide paid sick time and other benefits to compensate employees who are unable to work due to illness. See **HR 405 Sick Leave**. If all leave has been exhausted, the employee may be advanced up to 24 hours of sick leave, as needed, or eligible employees may request shared leave. See **HR 413 Shared Leave**. Advanced sick leave must be repaid within 6 months, starting from the first date used.
- b. During an infectious disease outbreak, it is critical that employees do not report to work while they are ill and/or experiencing the following symptoms: fever, cough, stuffy/runny nose, fatigue, chills, head/body aches, shortness of breath. Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people with an infectious illness such as the flu remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F or 37.8 degrees C) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Employees who report to work ill will be sent home in accordance with these health guidelines.

**8. Requests for Medical Information or Documentation**

- a. If you are out sick or show symptoms of being ill, it may become necessary to request information from you and/or your health care provider. In general, we would request medical information to confirm your need to be absent, to show whether and how an absence relates to the infection, and to know that it is appropriate for you to return to work. As always, we expect and appreciate your cooperation if and when medical information is sought.

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- b. Our policy is to treat any medical information as a confidential medical record. In furtherance of this policy, any disclosure of medical information is in limited circumstances with supervisors, department leaders, first aid and safety personnel, and government officials as required by law.

**9. Telecommuting**

- a. Based on information and/or orders from federal, state, or local government and public health agencies, the Partnership may deem it necessary to transition all staff to temporary, ad-hoc teleworking arrangements. Leadership and HR will draft a general, temporary teleworking agreement.
- b. Absent a Partnership-wide ad-hoc arrangement, telework requests will follow our normal telecommuting policies. See **HR 213 Telecommuting**.

**10. Review of Policy Provisions**

- a. After the Partnership is closed for a period determined by the President and Board Chair, the President and Board Chair shall review and either terminate, revise or renew the leave and compensations provisions of this policy.

**11. Emergency Layoff**

- a. An emergency lay-off may be declared by the President, if the Partnership remains totally closed or partially closed for an indefinite period of time due to a public health emergency. The President shall make this decision after consultation with the County Public Health Director.
- b. During the emergency layoff, enrolled employees who are laid off will continue to participate in health, dental and vision insurance plans. The Partnership shall pay the employer contribution and the employee contribution for the month following the layoff, with the provision that the enrolled employees shall repay the Partnership for any contribution made on their behalf within 12 months.
- c. An employee shall not be paid for leave at the time of the emergency layoff; however vacation, sick and personal leave will continue to accrue during the lay-off to be credited to the employee's balance upon return from the lay-off. If the reduction-in-force should occur before the employee returns, the vacation leave accumulated while on lay-off shall be paid along with other unused vacation leave that was on hand at the time of the layoff.
- d. Should an employee resign, retire, die or be dismissed during the lay-off, all vacation leave owed at the time of the lay-off shall be paid.
- e. An employee may be eligible for unemployment benefits with the North Carolina Employee Security Commission while on an emergency lay-off. Employees should contact the North Carolina Employment Security Commission for further details.

**12. Hiring**

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- a. During a communicable disease emergency, if new hires are needed to cover emergency operations, the President is authorized to execute the immediate hiring of an individual who is determined to be qualified and able to do the work by:
  - i. Waiving the posting policy,
  - ii. Waiving the minimum qualification policy and
  - iii. Waiving the hiring of relatives (nepotism) policy.
- b. Employees hired under these conditions should be given a temporary or time-limited appointment.
- c. The President is also authorized to offer competitive salaries for the duration of the emergency.

**13. Employee Reassignments**

- a. The President is authorized to assign employees where they are most needed and compensate them accordingly for the duration of the emergency.

For additional information about influenza, refer to the following websites:

Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.flu.gov>

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/commitigation.html>

N. C. Division of Public Health:

<http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc/pandemic/html>

World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swinfluenza/en/index.html>

Department of Labor

[http://www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza\\_pandemic.html](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza_pandemic.html)