COVID-19 Return to Work Safety Policy

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and wellness of our employees during the State of Washington’s COVID-19 “Stay Home, Stay Safe” directive and subsequent “Safe Start” phases, and to meet the criteria of Governor Inslee’s safety guidelines.

STRUCTURE:

The Business Administrator is designated CWCOG COVID-19 reporting officer and agency policy administrator. The Executive Director is the designated the alternate.

The CWCOG main office will remain closed to the public until Washington State has cleared Cowlitz County for Safe Start Phase IV. Phase IV includes resuming unrestricted staffing of worksites but with continued physical distancing and good hygiene. Staff will continue to be allowed to work from home until the State has concluded its “Safe Start” phases and guidelines.

Essential employees, as defined by the State of Washington at the beginning of the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” directive, will continue to work from the office site to maintain the essential activities of the agency’s financial and technical operations allowing the agency to continue to be viable in its services during this time.

All other employees will continue to work from home until such time that the office is officially re-opened.

Any employee entering the office space during this time shall observe the Health Screening criteria outlined below.

Meetings will continue to be held by using on-line meeting software such as ZOOM or Skype.

GUIDELINES:

It is the general practice of the agency that staff shall remain home when they feel they have contracted an illness that could affect the well-being of other staff. The risk of additional staff contracting the illness and adding to the loss of work hours is considered unnecessary given the ability to work from home if needed. The guidelines below are in addition to the general practice of the agency.

1.0 Health Screenings:

Health screenings shall be conducted by each employee at home. If at any time the employee answers ‘yes’ to any of the following criteria, they shall self-report to the Business Administrator especially if they have been in the office at any length of time during the previous 14 days. This list may be amended as the CDC continues to identify additional symptoms.

Screening Criteria - Within the last 72 hours, have you had any of these symptoms:

a. Fever (100.4 F or higher) or a sense of having a fever (chills, aches, etc.)?

b. Cough and/or shortness of breath that you cannot attribute to another health condition?

c. Headache that you cannot attribute to another health condition?

d. Sore throat, congestion and/or runny nose that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
2.0 Exposure Response Plan & Reporting Procedures

2.1 Exposure of An Employee

If an employee has been exposed and/or tested positive for COVID-19, he/she will report that information to the Business Administrator who in turn will:

a. Report as appropriate to health authorities, the Landlord, and other employees.
b. Maintain employee medical confidentiality.
c. If an employee has had direct contact with an individual that has tested positive, he/she will self-quarantine for 14 days or as otherwise recommended by health officials.

2.2 Exposure Within the Office Space or Facility

Upon receiving a report of a positive test for someone who has been inside the facility, the Business Administrator in coordination with the Landlord will:

a. Close areas used by the sick person and evaluate whether a full office closure is warranted.
b. Open outside doors and windows to increase circulation in the area.
c. Wait 24 hours before the facility is cleaned or disinfected.
d. Clean and disinfect all common areas used by the person who is sick.
e. Vacuum the space when empty of other staff if needed using vacuum equipped with a high-efficiency particular air (HEPA) filter, if available.
f. If possible, request that the landlord temporarily turn off the central HVAC system that services the space, so that particles that escape from vacuuming will not circulate throughout the facility.
g. Once common areas have been appropriately disinfected, they can be opened for use.
h. If more than 7 days has passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection will not be necessary, but will be carried out anyway.

2.3 Return-To-Work Criteria

2.3.1 Exposure – No Symptoms/Negative Test Results

If an employee has had direct exposure and does not exhibit any of the symptoms as outlined in Section 1.0 within the 14-day, self-quarantine period (Section 2.1c) and/or the employee has tested negative for COVID-19 by health officials, the employee may discontinue isolation and return to work in the
office upon conclusion of the 14-day quarantine period or as otherwise recommended by health officials.

2.3.2 Exposure – Symptoms/Positive Test Results
If an employee has tested positive or exhibited symptoms (Section 1.0) for COVID-19 and were directed self-care at home by health officials, they may discontinue isolation and return to work in the office under the following conditions:

a. At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery from symptoms defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and lack of respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and,

b. At least 14 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; or

c. As recommended and cleared by health officials in writing.

2.4 Use of Leave

2.4.1 Leave for Exposure – No Symptoms
If the employee (a) has had a direct exposure and is waiting for a test result OR (b) upon receiving a positive test result is without symptoms, they will be required to work from home until such time as the quarantine period has ended and/or they are cleared by their doctor to return to the office to work.

2.4.2 Leave for Exposure – Symptoms/Positive Test Results
If the employee (a) has received a positive test result and displays symptoms of COVID-19 during the policy’s 14-day, self-quarantine period AND (b) the symptoms are enough to interfere with the employees quality of work while working from home, the Executive Director has the authority to grant additional paid sick leave hours to the employee’s sick leave pool once their accumulative sick leave balance has been exhausted. Such leave will be requested in writing by the employee. The maximum number of hours will be considered on a case by case basis for the purpose of covering such time until the employee can return to work at home and finish out their quarantine period and/or cleared by a doctor to return to the office to work.

3.0 Safety Criteria

3.1 Face Coverings

a. A limited number of cloth face masks will be provided to employees by the agency and shall be worn in public areas, common areas, lobbies, hallways, break rooms, and other areas where social distancing of 6 feet may be difficult to assure. Employees may also use their own personal masks in the office.

b. Employees at workstations where there is at least 6 feet of social distancing are not required to wear cloth face coverings at their workstations, but will be required to have a mask on hand at all times and wear them when entering common spaces where 6 feet of distancing cannot be ensured.

b. Cloth face coverings provided by the agency and any personal masks used will be maintained and properly cleaned and cared for by each staff member at all times.
3.2 Social Distancing

a. Employees are encouraged to continue to work remotely rather than maintaining in-office work hours to minimize the number of people in the office at one time.

b. The CWCOG shall strive to limit the number of employees in the office at any given time to ensure the ability to maintain the 6-foot acceptable social distance between individuals in common areas. Employees wishing to work in the office and are not considered part of the essential in-office staff shall notify the Business Administrator in advance of their arrival. Employees must not enter the office until written confirmation (email or text) is received. Permission can be granted for a set schedule (one-time permission) or intermittent visits (must be authorized each time).

c. Employees shall respect the 6-foot distancing rule when entering shared spaces such as the conference room, kitchenette, walkways between desks, meeting area, stairs, lobby, etc. by taking turns or maintaining the 6-foot distance if possible.

d. During this period, the CWCOG car will be limited use only. Staff are encouraged to use their own vehicles to which they will receive full mileage reimbursement.

3.3 Sanitation

a. Common use and high-touch areas shall be sanitized daily within the office by office personnel.

b. Common use and high-touch areas outside of the office are maintained by the landlord.

c. Cleaning supplies shall be made available to the staff for cleaning their personal workstations.

d. Chairs, tables and work spaces for new employees shall receive a deep cleaning by staff prior to the employee’s start date.

3.4 Visitor Tracking

Any guests that may enter the office space during this time will be required to sign into a guest registry by front office staff. The registry will be maintained at the front desk.

3.5 Safety Training

a. Periodic COVID-19 Safety Training materials and/or updates shall be provided to staff.

b. The Safety Plan will be made available to employees, posted on the agency website, and made available at the CWCOG’s main office site.