



COMMUNICABLE DISEASE EMERGENCY PLAN FOR SULLIVAN COUNTY



Submitted: April 1, 2021

Introduction

This plan has been developed in accordance with the amended New York State Labor Law section 27-c and New York State Education Law paragraphs k and l of subdivision 2 of section 2801-a (as amended by section 1 of part B of chapter 56 of the laws of 2016), as applicable. These laws were amended by the passing of legislation S8617B/A10832 signed by the Governor of New York State on September 7, 2020. The amendments require public employers to develop a plan for operations in the event of a declared public health emergency involving a communicable disease. It includes the identification of essential positions, facilitation of remote work for non-essential positions, provision of personal protective equipment, and protocols for supporting contact tracing. It was developed to best assure the safety of our employees and contractors, and the continuity of our operations.

Communications

The County Manager of Sullivan County holds the authority to execute and direct the implementation of this plan. Upon determination that it is necessary to implement this plan, all employees and contractors of Sullivan County shall be notified and details provided as possible and necessary. Additional information and updates to these groups will be provided on a regular basis. Internal communications with Sullivan County employees will take place through a variety of means, including e-mail, teleconferencing and video conferencing. Other tools may also be used, including platforms such as Everbridge/NY Alert, which Sullivan County in conjunction with the E-911 Department, currently utilize for internal emergency notifications. The Sullivan County Communications Director will maintain communications with the public and constituents as needed throughout the implementation of this plan.

The County Manager will maintain awareness of information, direction and guidance from public health officials and the Governor's office, directing the implementation of changes as necessary. Upon resolution of the public health emergency, the County Manager will direct the resumption of normal operations or operations with modifications as necessary.

Assumptions and Parameters of this Plan

When completing this Plan, it quickly became necessary to establish some parameters to help guide our decision making. For example, a snowplow operator provides essential services during the winter, but not the summer. Some social services employees could work from home full-time for two to three weeks, but would need to access State databases from the office if the emergency lasted longer than a month.

- This Plan assumes that the emergency lasts for one month. If an actual emergency extends beyond one month, the decisions made here should be re-evaluated with the expected duration in mind.
- This Plan assumes that the emergency occurs during the busiest season for each position. If an actual emergency occurs during a time when a position or agency is not providing essential services the decisions made here should be re-evaluated with the season or timeframe in mind.

Appendix A: Spreadsheet of Essential and Non-essential Positions

When confronting events that disrupt normal operations, Sullivan County is committed to ensuring that essential functions will be continued even under the most challenging circumstances. During activation of this plan, all other activities may be suspended to enable the organization to concentrate on providing the critical functions and building the internal capabilities necessary to increase and eventually restore operations.

Appendix A contains four tabs that identify:

- 1) County Essential Worksite-based Employees (as of 1/27/2021)
- 2) County Non-essential or Remote-capable Employees (as of 1/27/2021)
- 3) Contractor Essential Businesses and Agencies (as of 1/27/2021)

4) Contractor Non-essential/Remote-capable Business and Agencies (as of 1/27/2021)

To conform to the provisions of NYS legislation S8617B/A10832, an essential employee is defined as needing to be physically present at a work site to perform his or her job and performing work that is necessary for continued operations during a communicable disease outbreak. Therefore, the four tabs provide information on both whether a function or service would be deemed to be essential during a communicable disease outbreak and whether or not the work could be performed primarily away from the workplace. And if the work cannot be done away from the workplace, could a portion of that work be done from another location? The intent is to be able to quickly review positions that, depending on the duration and seasonal timing of the outbreak, may be considered essential and that may need to primarily work at county facilities.

Tab 1: County Essential Worksite-based Employees

This tab includes information by department, including the job titles, number of those positions and links to position descriptions for all County employee positions that are filled as of 1/27/2021 and have been deemed to be essential worksite-based positions. To be considered “**Essential Worksite-based**” the employee must be physically present at a work site to perform his or her job and must perform work that is necessary for continued operations during a communicable disease outbreak. Note that this definition does not take into account technical capabilities; if a person does not have a computer to use at home, for example, they were not automatically considered essential.

In addition to the information above, Tab 1 includes information regarding an explanation of why each essential position is considered necessary to work at the worksite for the operation of the County during a communicable disease outbreak.

Tab 2: County Non Essential or Remote-capable Employees

This tab includes information by department, including the job titles, number of those positions and links to position descriptions for all County employee positions that are filled as of 1/27/2021 and have been deemed to be non-essential or remote-capable positions. To be considered “**Non-essential or Remote-capable**” the employee either performs work that is not necessary for continued operations during a communicable disease outbreak or is able to perform his or her job from a remote location.

Tab 3: Contractor Essential Worksite-based Businesses and Agencies

This tab includes information such as the name of the contracted business or agency (as of 1/27/2021) that provide services that have been deemed to be essential during a communicable disease. In addition to providing essential services, entities in Tab 3 must provide contracted services that cannot be performed primarily away from county operations for one month during the busy season for the service.

Tab 4: Contractor Non Essential or Remote-capable Businesses and Agencies

This tab includes information such as the name of the contracted business or agency (as of 1/27/2021) that provide services that have been deemed to be non-essential during a communicable disease or remote capable. In addition to the information above, Tab 4 includes an explanation of why the contractor is deemed non-essential and an assessment of whether or not those services could be provided primarily away from county operations for one month during the busy season for that service.

Remote Work

Allowing certain staff to work remotely is one effective way to decrease density in the work place. Non-essential employees and contractors able to accomplish their functions remotely will be enabled to do so to the greatest extent possible.

The first step will be to work with department heads and supervisors to determine which staff may work remotely, and ask them to follow the County's Teleworking policy and complete the Telework signature page. This will ensure consistent application of County policy and assessment of remote work needs.

To enable approved staff to work remotely, Information Technology Services (ITS) staff will review needs and work to equip staff for remote work, possibly including:

- Desktop hardware and necessary peripherals
- Remote access to County resources and secure network drives
- Staff access to virtual and physical desktop resources including all software, data and database applications necessary to perform their duties
- A solution for telephone communications

ITS staff will then:

- Provide the appropriate information technology, support, and protocols to ensure effective and efficient information sharing while minimizing cyber risk consistent with the communicable disease preparedness, response, and recovery needs.
- Establish tailored business emergency communications and information protocols that address differing requirements across all pandemic phases.
- Identify and assess current and available communication technologies within Sullivan County Government, in the community, and from federal/state government.
- Develop a plan for enhancing, procuring, leasing, or sharing necessary communications technologies.
- Establish emergency and information sharing communication protocols for different technologies.
- Ensure sufficient redundancies in technologies are available and planned.
- Verify telecommuters including contractors have correct hardware/software and can conduct business using teleconferences, conference calls, or other means.

Sullivan County has already invested in technology such as Zoom, and Remote Access Server connections to assist with telecommuters continuing business continuity.

Appendix A includes columns that evaluate whether essential employee and contractor positions could perform services remotely. These determinations were made after assuming that employees and contractors had adequate technology available, including laptop computers, phones and network access.

Rotational & Staggered Shifts

Implementing rotational shifts may be possible for personnel performing duties which are necessary to be performed on-site to keep continuity in each office. This may be sections of the staffing rotating week by week from in office hours to teleworking hours. As possible, management may identify opportunities for staff to work outside core business hours as a strategy of limiting exposure, based on business needs. Regardless of changes in start and end times of shifts, Sullivan County will strive to ensure that employees are provided with their typical or contracted minimum work hours per week. Supervisors will continue to be required to supervisor in person and remote staff, which will require the Supervisor to periodically be in the office.

For instance, in the case of COVID-19, the provisions of the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* required employers to offer up to two weeks (80 hours) of paid sick leave at the employee's regular rate of pay for a period which the employee is unable to work due to quarantine and/or experiencing symptoms and seeking medical diagnosis. Further, under the Expanded Family Medical Leave Act of the FFCRA, employers were required to provide up to twelve weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay if the employee is unable to work because of a bona fide need to care for an individual subject to quarantine or to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to the public health emergency. Finally, the NYS COVID 19 Leave provided up to 14 days of leave in the event an employee is subject to a mandatory or precautionary quarantine order. In order to implement this leave, the Human Resources Department followed legal advice to ensure a process consistent with Federal regulations and created employee informational materials. Notification was provided to all County employees through the process outlined above.

Personal Protective Equipment

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) to reduce the spread of infectious disease is important to supporting the health and safety of essential employees and contractors.

Protocols will be followed to identify necessary quantities of PPE per shift per employee. For purposes of this Plan, PPE includes, but is not limited to all equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards, including gloves, masks, face shields, foot and eye protection, protective hearing devices, respirators, hard hats, and disposable gowns and aprons.

Once the Emergency Operations Center has named an Incident Commander, that person will:

1. Review the list of Essential Employees and Contractors and identified PPE to determine accuracy given the particular communicable disease outbreak that is occurring
2. Identify what PPE is appropriate
3. Identify quantity needed, however 2 pieces/shift of each type of PPE required for the essential employees and contractors will be the minimum standard
4. Review the list of Non-essential Employees and Contractors in Appendix A to determine PPE needs for those who are able to work remotely
5. Identify suppliers currently under contract with the County or on state bid contract
6. Make the purchase, keep all available documentation, including receipts and shipping documents, and record of payment. Keep in mind the possible need to create and fund a line item for emergency equipment/supplies and possible reimbursement documentation that may be required in the future
7. Identify one or multiple receiving locations and storage locations, depending on the quantity of PPE
8. Develop an evaluation/rotation schedule for maintaining high-quality PPE that includes understanding of the quantity, type of PPE and length of storage
9. Identify who will manage the storage, rotation and distribution of the equipment
10. Identify method of distribution (use existing plans for SNS/POD)

Note that while cleaning supplies are not PPE, there is a related need for cleaning supplies used to sanitize surfaces, as well as hand soap and hand sanitizer. The Coronavirus pandemic demonstrated that supply chains were not able to keep up with increased demand for these products early in the pandemic. As such, we are including these supplies in this section as they are pertinent to protecting the health and safety of our employees and contractors.

Workplace Exposures and Positive Cases

Protocols will be established for workplace exposures and positive cases in the workplace that adhere to recommendations of the Sullivan County Director of Public Health, the New York State Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control. Those protocols will be dependent on the nature of the communicable disease, however in broad terms, these are described below.

To reduce the possibility of exposure, precautions will be taken to reduce office density and require those working near others to wear appropriate PPE at all times to limit the potential of transmission. This may include directives to:

- Limit in-person interactions as much as possible
- Disinfect work areas according to current CDC/public health protocol
- Require mask wearing or other necessary PPE
- Require daily health screening questions and attestations from employees and contractors

Potentially exposed employees or contractors who do not have symptoms may be directed by their department head or supervisor to remain at home and practice social distancing as recommended by the CDC/public health for the communicable disease in question.

- As possible, these employees will be permitted to work remotely during this period of time if they are not ill.

If an employee or contractor exhibits symptoms of the communicable disease that is the subject of the public health emergency:

- Per Sullivan County Reopening plan, employees and contractors who exhibit symptoms are required to stay home and not report to the workplace and should contact their physician.
- Employees and contractors who exhibit symptoms outside of work will notify their supervisor and stay home, with a recommendation to contact their physician.
- Employees are permitted to return to work in line with documentation provided by their order of isolation, CDC/public health guidance and have consulted with a healthcare provider.

If an employee or contractor has tested positive for the communicable disease that is the subject of the public health emergency:

- Apply the steps identified above, as applicable.
- Areas occupied for prolonged periods of time by the subject employee or contractor will be closed off and will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with CDC/public health guidance for the disease in question.
- Any common areas entered, surfaces touched, or equipment used shall be cleaned and disinfected immediately.
- Identification of potential employee and contractor exposures will be conducted.
- If an employee or contractor is confirmed to have the disease in question, public health will conduct contact tracing to inform all contacts of their possible exposure. Confidentiality shall be maintained as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

It should be noted that there are expected to be nuances or complexities associated with potential exposures, close contacts, symptomatic persons, and those testing positive. All CDC/public health recommendations and requirements will be followed and actions taken in close coordination with our local public health office.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

CDC/public health guidelines will be followed for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces/areas. These may include:

- As possible, employees and contractors will clean their own workspaces frequently
- High traffic/high touch areas and areas which are accessible to the public/constituents will be disinfected more frequently
- Staff tasked with cleaning and disinfecting areas will be issued and required to wear PPE appropriate to the task
- Surfaces will be disinfected with products that meet EPA criteria for use against the virus in question and which are appropriate for that surface
- Staff will follow instructions of cleaning products to ensure safe and effective use of the products

Employee and Contractor Leave

Public health emergencies are extenuating and unanticipated circumstances in which Sullivan County is committed to reducing the burden on our employees and contractors.

Generally, Sullivan County employees are afforded accrual time based on their longevity and in accordance with their respective collective bargaining agreements. In the event of a public health emergency, Department Heads and Supervisors will be directed to balance the need for employees to protect their own health and that of their families while maintaining continuity of essential County operations. Department Heads with the approval of the County Manager's Office will be instructed to implement additional measures such as remote work options and flexible work arrangements wherever possible to preserve employees' leave accruals.

County management will work with Human Resources to analyze and interpret New York State and Federal Executive Orders to comply with any additional leave requirements issued during a public health emergency. When new leaves are implemented, notice will be sent to all County employees via e-mail and through paper methods for those without access to e-mail. The Department of Human Resources will distribute required labor postings to all Departments.

For instance, in the case of COVID-19, the provisions of the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* required employers to offer up to two weeks (80 hours) of paid sick leave at the employee's regular rate of pay for a period which the employee is unable to work due to quarantine and/or experiencing symptoms and seeking medical diagnosis. Further, under the Expanded Family Medical Leave Act of the FFCRA, employers were required to provide up to twelve weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay if the employee is unable to work because of a bona fide need to care for an individual subject to quarantine or to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to the public health emergency. In order to implement this leave, the Human Resources Department followed legal advice to ensure a process consistent with Federal regulations and created employee informational materials. Notification was provided to all County employees through the process outlined above.

Contractors, either independent or affiliated with a contracted firm, are not classified as employees of Sullivan County, and as such are not provided with paid leave time by Sullivan County, unless required by law.

Documentation of Work Hours and Locations

In a public health emergency, it may be necessary to document work hours and locations of each employee and contractor to support contact tracing efforts. Identification of locations shall include on-site work and off-site visits. This information may be used by Sullivan County to support contact tracing within the organization and may be shared with local public health officials. Methods to track hours and locations may include:

- Paper sign-in sheets for employees, contractors and members of the public in each office or work site
- Utilizing the electronic Kronos timekeeping system
- Daily check-ins with someone designated on staff, which could be combined with daily health questions and screening

Housing for Essential Employees

There are circumstances within a public health emergency when it may be prudent to have essential employees lodged in such a manner which will help prevent the spread of the subject communicable disease to protect these employees from potential exposures, thus helping to ensure their health and safety and the continuity of Sullivan County's essential operations.

If such a need arises, hotel rooms are expected to be the most viable option. Sullivan County routinely contracts with a few local hotels to house homeless individuals and have used this contract to additionally house individuals who were unable to quarantine or isolate effectively in their own residence. If hotel rooms are for some reason deemed not practical or ideal, or if there are no hotel rooms available, Sullivan County will coordinate with the local institutes of higher learning to identify and arrange for these housing needs. The person responsible for find this housing, if so needed, would be the Incident Commander or his or her designee.

*Please note that the County will follow all federal and state laws and guidelines when applicable.