



BALDWIN COUNTY COMMISSION PLANNED RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC FOR COUNTY EMPLOYEES

The new coronavirus, COVID-19, is not a flu but a pneumonia-like infection. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) believes at this time that symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. The good news is that, except in rare situations, an employee diagnosed with the virus will have no significant long-term health care problems. These policies are subject to change.

A. PLAN OBJECTIVES

- ✓ County’s Primary Goal: Protect Employees and Citizens
- ✓ Reduce the spread of disease among staff.
- ✓ Protect people at higher risk for complications.
- ✓ Maintain critical operations.
- ✓ Minimize impact on your residents, customers and businesses.
- ✓ Be proactive, rather than reactive, by taking small measures now to minimize risk.

This plan will supersede all other County policies if the pandemic impacts Baldwin County. This plan is subject to change as needed, when conditions change and as events play out.

B. KEY BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

Essential employees are defined as those who will be required to work from home or in their offices so that critical government services can still be provided. Non-essential departments and employees are defined as those non-critical during a pandemic. The chart below shows the County’s plan of action if a pandemic occurs.

Essential	Essential	Non-Essential
EOC	Animal Shelter	Planning and Zoning
Solid Waste	Juvenile Detention Center	Parks
Probate	Building Maintenance	Archives
Council on Aging	Custodial	Legislative Delegation
Coroner’s Office	CIS	
Highway	Building Inspections	
Personnel	Finance/Accounting	
Administration	Budgeting/Purchasing	

- ✓ Departments need to inventory equipment that remote workers will be utilizing for telecommuting.
- ✓ Essential employees who will be not working from home should prepare by developing a “ready bag” that they take home with them at the end of each day. This gives the employee the ability to change clothes before returning home to reduce potential exposures to family members.
- ✓ Expense Accounts will be established, and access granted to all departments who will be purchasing items related to the pandemic.
- ✓ Impact on County services.
 - Department heads should be prepared to backfill positions if employees are absent.
 - Communicate and practice various scenarios with staff to ensure understanding.



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- Ensure lines of communication are available for all critical staff and departments.

C. WORKPLACE EXPOSURE

- ✓ No handshaking.
- ✓ Minimize face-to-face contact.
- ✓ Minimize meetings with large numbers of people.
- ✓ Use email, phones and teleconferencing/webinars during a pandemic, rather than face-to-face contact.
- ✓ Effectively handle materials and customers/patients that could be contaminated.
- ✓ Wash hands often and practice other sanitary means to prevent spread of germs.
- ✓ If an employee is diagnosed/confirmed positive with the virus, the workplace should be shut down and disinfected before allowing other employees to return.
- ✓ All County related travel is to be cancelled or postponed.

D. WORKPLACE POLICIES

County Administrator/Personnel Director will coordinate cases/events with Commissioners and staff. These policies are subject to change.

- ✓ **Presumed or Confirmed Cases** of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in employee or immediate family member – If a medical official determines that an employee is presumed or confirmed to have the virus, then the County will pay the employee for a minimum of 2 weeks for quarantine, based on medical professional directives. Additional benefits will be paid in accordance to Federal guidelines.
- ✓ **Exposure Event** – Quarantine of employee by medical staff – County will pay employee a minimum of 2 weeks at their regular rate of pay. Additional benefits will be paid in accordance to Federal guidelines.
- ✓ If an employee chooses to personally travel to a high-risk country and is quarantined upon return to the U.S., the County will not pay the employee during this timeframe. The employee will have the ability to utilize any earned leave (sick, vacation, etc.), or telecommute while quarantined. The County reserves the right to place the employee in voluntary quarantine under these conditions.
- ✓ The County reserves the right to question any employee that is planning travel during the Local State of Emergency. Including questions concerning about leaving the United States, mode of travel (airplane, etc.) The County may require the employee to be screened before returning to work on a case by case basis.
- ✓ Commissioners will make decisions which impact the County's services during a pandemic.

E. INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES – **Immediate Implementation**

- ✓ Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace and in high visibility locations.
- ✓ Provide soap, water, and alcohol-based hand rubs in multiple locations and routinely refill.



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- ✓ Employees should clean hands often by washing for at least 20 seconds using soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available.
- ✓ Supply tissues and no-touch waste bins.
- ✓ Ask employees to stay home when sick.
- ✓ Employees should routinely clean commonly touched surfaces and sanitize all areas of their workspace daily.

F. ENCOURAGE SOCIAL DISTANCING – Immediate implementation

- ✓ Social distancing is an intervention to increase the physical distance between people and reduce the spread of disease.
- ✓ Implement policies and procedures for critical employees to work remotely.
- ✓ Allow telecommuting, if possible/necessary.
- ✓ Permit flexible work hours (e.g. staggered shifts), if possible.
- ✓ Ensure that employees have the technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees working from home.
- ✓ Place appropriate signage at all entrances for customers, visitors, etc.
- ✓ Place a locked drop-box at the designated entrance to the building, where documents and payments can be submitted safely, without the need to interact directly with staff, if applicable.
- ✓ Provide email and telephone number on signage for assistance to customers utilizing the drop box or other contact methods (phone, email, fax, etc.)
- ✓ Establish employee business travel and training restrictions to minimize risk.

G. SEPARATE SICK EMPLOYEES - Immediate implementation

Employees who report to work having a fever or flu-like symptoms upon arrival, or who become sick during the workday, should be separated from others and immediately sent home. Ensure that:

- ✓ All managers and employees are aware of County policies and the expectation that sick employees stay home.
- ✓ Do **NOT** go directly to the hospital or urgent care. This will minimize the risk of exposure risk all concerned parties. **If a person has questions about being tested for COVID-19, they should call their healthcare provider to make arrangements for testing. It is important to call your healthcare provider's office before going in to let them know you may have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep others from getting infected or exposed to COVID-19.**
- ✓ If you do not have a healthcare provider, please call 1-888-264-2256, starting March 14 at 8:00 a.m. In the event the line is busy, please try to call again.

H. ANTICIPATE ABSENTEEISM

Prepare for employee absences resulting from personal illness, caring for ill family members, and dismissal of early childhood programs and K-12 schools. Be ready to adapt your business practices to



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maintain critical operations.

- ✓ Employees with children in early childhood programs and K-12 schools are encouraged to find available childcare.
- ✓ Supervisors are strongly encouraged to work with employees with children with the availability of flexible scheduling and/or reduced hours.
- ✓ An employee unable to find childcare will be paid in accordance with Federal guidelines.
- ✓ Cross-train employees to carry out critical functions so the workplace can operate when essential staff are out.
- ✓ Prepare to temporarily suspend non-essential operations, if necessary.
- ✓ Be prepared to differentiate between critical and non-critical services if staff shortages occur due to illnesses or quarantines.
- ✓ Utilize “what-if” scenarios with essential and non-essential staff to prepare.

I. PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS - Immediate implementation

Our government is only as healthy as our employees. Employees should immediately take standard steps to prepare for staying at home, if needed:

- ✓ Make sure to have enough prescription drugs at home.
- ✓ Keep non-prescription drugs and other health supplies on hand. This includes pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold aides, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- ✓ Get copies of electronic health records from the doctor, hospital, or pharmacy.
- ✓ Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would like to be cared for if they got sick, and what's needed to care for them at home.
- ✓ Try to minimize being in large groups, events and traveling by plane – any direct contact with others you can reasonably avoid will help.

J. COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL - Immediate implementation

- ✓ Keep workforce informed about the outbreak.
- ✓ Provide positive, factual information which will help calm and encourage staff.
- ✓ Establish clear lines of communication between essential staff members and departments to ensure critical services can be provided.
- ✓ Establish a 24-hour hotline if government is forced to shut down.
- ✓ Provide timely and factual press releases as needed to keep community informed.

K. PROCESS FOR ACTIVATING THE COUNTY’S PLAN - Immediate implementation

- ✓ Employees must immediately notify, by phone or email only, their supervisor/employer if they have experienced an exposure or received a presumed or confirmed diagnosis of coronavirus.
- ✓ Employees who have been medically diagnosed with the virus or who were quarantined must submit a physician’s release to return to work. If the employee was self-quarantined due to exposure, then the employee must be symptom free for fourteen days before returning to work.
- ✓ Work with local health officials as needed to manage the pandemic.



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L. WORKFORCE INVOLVEMENT - Immediate implementation

- ✓ Ensure that every person and department deemed essential has reviewed the County's Planned Response plan and is ready to act immediately.
- ✓ Every department must test the plan to help detect gaps or problems that need attention by utilizing "what if" scenarios prior to shut down or events.
- ✓ **Every** employee should be familiar with this plan and be prepared to act immediately if an employee illness or event occurs.
- ✓ **Every** employee should know and understand the role they will play if an event occurs.
- ✓ Employees who may be classified initially as non-essential could become essential in the event of major outbreaks and/or quarantine of essential employees. Be prepared!