



## **COVID-19 Employee Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

Updated August 20, 2020

**We recognize that educators and school support staff are uniquely impacted by COVID-19, and appreciate you sharing your views and concerns with us regarding the opening of schools in August. Please know that we are working to support you by providing a healthy and safe work and learning environment. Now, more than ever, we need to do work that we love. And now, more than ever, students need us. To assist you with the transition back for the 2020-21 school year we have created this list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).**

### **1. What measures are being taken to ensure my safety?**

Please see the [Guidelines for Opening Schools in August 2020](#), which have been endorsed by the Department of Public Health (DPH). Face coverings or masks will be expected. Schools and departments have developed a schedule for increased cleaning and disinfecting. To the extent possible, social distancing will be practiced. Transition times and movement around the building will be lessened. Schools will be teaching and reinforcing proper handwashing and good health and hygiene etiquette. Provision of cleaning supplies have been increased. We will limit the sharing of supplies and devices. We have ensured proper operation of ventilation. Water fountains have been turned off and students and staff are encouraged to bring their own water bottles. Where possible, the layout of rooms will be modified to create distance between students. Physical barriers have been installed around reception areas. Communal spaces will be redesigned. Where possible, schedules have been designed to keep groups of students together. Schools will have a designated isolation room for those exhibiting symptoms.

### **2. What does “masks are expected” mean?**

The wearing of masks by both students and staff is expected. This means that any time classroom activities allow or movement around the building occurs, a mask should be worn. There will be no disciplinary action taken against anyone who does not wear a mask, especially for medical reasons, but the importance of protecting health by wearing a mask will be taught.

### **3. Who do I contact if I have symptoms related to COVID-19 or if I test positive for COVID-19?**

You should contact an administrator or supervisor.

#### **4. Do I have to use my sick leave if I have health concerns and have to shelter in place with doctor's orders?**

Not Immediately. First, all employees will receive 10 days (80 hours or equivalent to their typical workday hours) for qualifying reasons under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). The days do not have to be used consecutively. Second, after all 10 days are exhausted, then sick leave will be used, or Family Medical Leave Assistance (FMLA) guidelines will be followed. Forsyth County Schools (FCS) awards your yearly cumulative earned sick leave at the beginning of the school year for use as needed. If you remain employed for the entire school year, these additional days provide the advantage of a number of days readily available for leave.

#### **5. What are the qualifying reasons under FFCRA?**

- Subject to a quarantine or isolation order issued by a Federal, State, or Local Authority.
- Advised by healthcare provider to self-quarantine.
- Experiencing symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis.
- Caring for an individual described in #1 or #2.
- Caring for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed (or childcare provider unavailable) due to COVID-19 related reasons. (If this reason is provided, consult with HR immediately as there are implications for pay).
- Experiencing any other substantially-similar conditions specified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

#### **6. What are Essential Worker Guidelines?**

School district employees are considered critical infrastructure workers or essential workers. If an essential worker has been exposed but is not ill and remains asymptomatic, he/she can return to work and adhere to the following guidelines: Check temperature twice a day; Self monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; Wear a mask; Social distance as work duties permit.

FCS believes that all employees, from those that work in the classroom to the cafeteria, counseling office to the bus, are essential for serving the vast array of academic, social, and emotional needs of our 51,000+ students. In July FCS asked our attorney to review Governor Kemp's Executive Orders regarding essential workers. His interpretation was that all school employees were essential workers. He has also informed us that we are not the only school district in Georgia to follow this recommendation. Throughout the pandemic Governor Kemp has relied upon guidance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for his orders. Recently, the DHS released new recommendations that explicitly agree that all school workers are essential as serving the critical infrastructure. FCS continues to work with employees who have health and safety concerns based on medical issues to determine how to accommodate their needs while still providing to the county's children the essential public education to which they are entitled.

**7. I have felt ill and have reasons to suspect that I have been exposed to COVID-19 but have not been tested. When can I return to work?**

Employees should not return to work if they feel ill or have symptoms related to COVID-19. If they feel better and are fever free for 24 hours, they may return to work following the Essential Worker Guidelines.

**8. If I am exposed will I be required to stay home and isolate/self-quarantine?**

No, unless ordered by your healthcare provider or the DPH. Employees may follow the Essential Worker Guidelines and continue to work.

**9. How can I “socially distance as work duties permit”?**

You should socially distance 6 feet from others as much as possible in the school building and avoid face-to-face interactions where people congregate. Collaboration and team meetings should occur through social distancing or remotely.

**10. Am I allowed to return to work if I have been exposed to COVID-19 but do not have symptoms and have not tested positive?**

You are allowed to return to work under the Essential Worker Guidelines.

**11. I have received a positive COVID-19 test – when can I return to work?**

Employees who receive a positive COVID-19 test need to contact their supervisor/administrator to discuss when they may return to work based on their first days of symptoms.

**12. I have received a positive COVID-19 test. Must I get clearance from my doctor and/or negative test before returning to work?**

Employees are not required to have a doctor’s clearance or a negative test before returning to work provided, they have not been on Family Medical Leave (FMLA).

**13. What if I’m afraid that I could contract COVID 19, bring it home to my family, or expose my elderly or immunocompromised family member?**

You should discuss your concerns with your administrator to determine if you have a qualifying reason to utilize FFCRA leave.

**14. What should I do if someone who lives in my home has been exposed to COVID-19?**

Your exposure is indirect and would be considered secondary. You could report to work or seek a diagnosis and request leave under the FFCRA guidelines.

**15. Will my class be quarantined if a child in the class tests positive for COVID-19?**

Positive cases of COVID 19 will be immediately reported to DPH and a decision will be made on who should be quarantined, contact tracing, and communication with parents.

**16. If the school system closes, will I be expected to work?**

Distance learning will continue if the system closes to face-to-face instruction. A decision will be made at that time of whether staff members will work from home or come to the building during the workday. If asked to work in the building, childcare will be available.

**17. If the school moves to virtual instruction due to COVID-19, do those days count against my FFCRA leave days?**

The days do not count against your FFCRA days as long as you are well and able to teach virtually. If you are sick or unable to teach for COVID-19 related reasons, you would use the FFCRA days. If you are not able to teach due to other reasons, you would use your sick/personal leave days.

**18. What do I do if my childcare is closed due to COVID-19?**

FFCRA allows for up to an additional 10 weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay where an employee, who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days, is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

**19. What if I don't want anyone to know if I contract COVID-19?**

We will not reveal the name of an infected staff member to others in the school unless the individual has given permission to do so.

**20. What if I am identified as a member of a vulnerable group (due to age or health condition) and desire to teach/work from home?**

Individuals seeking accommodations should work with their supervisors (who may in turn consult with Human Resources) to see if there are modifications that can be made to the employee's duties/environment. Working from home is most likely not a reasonable accommodation when school is in session as students require in-person instruction, supervision, and care.

**21. If I have an underlying condition or a disability, how will you make accommodations to keep me safe?**

You will follow the normal procedures and talk to your administrator at your school to reach an agreement about what accommodations can be put into place. The accommodations will be made on an individual basis and follow all American with Disabilities Act (ADA) protections.

**22. What if I am afraid of discrimination or retaliation if I seek ADA accommodations?**

Current Board of Education policies and procedures are in place and expressly prohibit discrimination and retaliation. If you feel that either have occurred, you should contact Human Resources.

**23. Who will pay for my doctor bills if I contract COVID 19?**

Health insurance is one of the benefits of employment with FCS should you need to use it for COVID 19.

**24. Will there be time for staff to be prepared to start school?**

Teachers will have six days of pre-planning designed for professional development and to prepare for the return of students. Administrators are developing individual school plans with the assistance of the Teaching and Learning Department.

**25. What support can the district offer for mental health wellness?**

Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available at no cost to all employees who have benefits. It is managed under the umbrella of our Metlife Life Insurance policy. The direct link to the EAP platform is [www.metlifeeap.lifeworks.com](http://www.metlifeeap.lifeworks.com). The district username is "metlifeeap" and the password is "eap." The information can also be found on the Finance webpage under the Employee Benefit Resource Center tab. There are many online resources which support employee wellness (articles, videos, etc.) and this program also offers five clinical visits via telephone or video call.

**26. If my school or the district goes 100% virtually for a temporary or extended period of time, where will staff be working? What about my school-age children?**

At this time, our plans are for FCS employees to work at their schools/building sites. In early August, HR emailed all staff with information concerning childcare that we will be providing for employees with school-age children. If you did not complete that form, please contact your child's base school.