

Office of Human Resources

***113 Infectious Disease***

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**Georgia Department of Human Services  
Human Resources Policy #113**

Infectious Disease

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**Next Review Date:**

**References:** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
DHS Human Resources Policy #111 — Telework  
DHS Human Resources Policy #1006 — Absence from Work

The Department of Human Services (DHS) recognizes that employees may be exposed to infectious diseases, particularly those employees routinely in contact with the public at our constituent offices. This policy will assist in the education, prevention and transmission of infectious diseases within the workplace.

## Section A: General Provisions

1. DHS will take proactive steps to protect the workplace in the event of an infectious disease exposure and/or outbreak.
2. Employees are encouraged to practice good hygiene while at work. Specifically washing and/or sanitizing their hands.
3. Employees are also encouraged to remain up to date on immunizations and receive the recommended vaccines and screenings.
4. Infectious diseases are illnesses caused by a virus, bacteria, fungi or parasite. Although signs and symptoms will vary depending on what is causing the infection, general symptoms include fever, diarrhea, fatigue, muscle aches, and coughing.
5. Common infectious and communicable diseases are colds, influenza (flu), measles, chickenpox, and tuberculosis. This list is not exhaustive.

## Section B: Office Standards

1. When constituent offices are informed of a potential contagious illness, each office should provide a separate waiting area for individuals with an infectious disease, until called for services. Be advised, clients may decline placement in a separate area.
2. Each constituent office will provide hand sanitizer to clients and employees.
3. Each constituent office will provide signage about decreasing the risk of disease transmission by following proper hygiene and offering alternative options of services to those who exhibit communicable disease symptoms, such as completing an application online or by phone.

4. Each constituent office will routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
5. The employee will notify their supervisor/manager if there is reasonable suspicion of a client having an infectious disease. The employee, manager, or supervisor should report this to their respective County Public Health Department or to the DPH 24/7 reporting hotline at 1.866.782.4584. DPH will assess the risk and determine any further response, including future actions.
6. A DHS staff member from the Emergency Management Team will be designated as the point of contact with The Department of Public Health to receive reports of cases and receive official communication to share with DHS staff.

## Section C: Communication and Information

1. DHS will immediately notify employees of infectious disease outbreaks and/or exposure.
2. Employees should familiarize themselves with the following information:
  - a. Respiratory Etiquette (See Section D below.)
  - b. DHS Human Resources Policy #111 — Telework
  - c. DHS Human Resources Policy #1006 — Absence from Work
3. The Office of Communications will coordinate with the appropriate Divisions, Offices, and other organizations to gather and disseminate essential information.
4. Effective mediums may include blast emails, memorandums, posters, flyers, open letters, etc. The Intranet will also be utilized as a source of information regarding infectious diseases.

## Section D: Respiratory Etiquette

1. When washing your hands, you should wet hands with water and apply soap. Then lather your hands by rubbing them together. Scrub the front and back of your hands for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse and dry your hands thoroughly.
2. Although washing hands with soap and water is the best method to reduce germs, hand sanitizer is a great alternative, when water and soap are unavailable. When using hand sanitizer, apply the product to the palm of one hand. Then rub your hands together covering all surfaces of your hands and fingers until they are dry.
3. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or mask, when coughing and sneezing. Instantly dispose of these items after use and immediately wash or sanitize your hands.
4. Consider making tissue and masks readily available to employees and clients in common areas.

## Section E: Sick Employees

1. Employees who have infectious diseases are encouraged to remain at home utilizing sick leave or telework, if telework will not impede the employee's recovery.
2. DHS will adhere to internal and state leave policies. Any changes or modifications to these policies will be communicated to all DHS employees and immediately implemented.

3. Employees should be given maximum flexibility with regard to leave policies.
4. The importance of sick workers staying home, and non-punitive leave policies should be discussed with companies providing contract or temporary workers.
5. Within the constraints of the internal and state leave policies, DHS managers and supervisors should exercise flexibility when employees use leave to care for a family member with an infectious disease.
6. A non-temporary salaried employee who contracts tuberculosis or infectious hepatitis, while charged with the care, treatment, or diagnosis of a person infected with tuberculosis or infectious hepatitis and who has exhausted all available sick and annual leave will be compensated, in accordance with the Rules of the State Personnel Board 478-1-16 — Absence from Work Section 21.

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local Human Resource Office, or email [DHS-Policies@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:DHS-Policies@dhs.ga.gov).