
Chief Human Resources and Professional Development Officer

2022-2023 COVID Leave Procedures

To: All Staff

From: David Lerner
Chief Human Resources and Professional Development Officer

In collaboration with our labor partners, the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) will be providing paid administrative leave for employees that test positive for COVID during the 2022-2023 school year. Employees will receive up to six (6) consecutive calendar days of leave when they have tested positive for COVID. This leave can be used for a maximum of two (2) separate events that are thirty (30) days or more apart. Paid administrative leave may only be used during the period of isolation as mandated by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Any unused days cannot be saved to be used for a subsequent instance.

Beginning on Wednesday, October 12th, in order to qualify for paid administrative leave for COVID, employees must submit to their supervisor a positive PCR test or documentation from a medical provider that demonstrates the employee tested positive for COVID. The PCR test or medical documentation must clearly state the date of the test, the positive testing result, and the employee's full name. **Home tests will not be accepted.** Test results must be submitted to your supervisor before the end of your isolation period to qualify for paid administrative leave.

Employees should follow normal procedures when absent from work, including entering the leave in Workday and requesting a substitute through Frontline, for staff who get substitutes. After the paid administrative leave has been processed by the Human Resources Benefits and Retirement Office, employees will need to go into Workday to cancel their sick leave to correct their balance.

If, after the mandatory isolation period, the employee is still experiencing symptoms and/or is too ill to return to work, the employee must use their own sick leave, other accrued leave, or take time off without pay until the employee is able to safely return to the workplace.

As the employee will be on paid administrative leave, they are expected to complete lesson plans, grade work, and/or complete other tasks that support their position at home as directed by their supervisor. If the employee is too ill to perform tasks directed by their supervisor, they will be required to use sick leave or other accrued leave.

In addition, HCPSS will retroactively readjust sick leave balances of employees that tested positive for COVID. The retroactive period will begin with COVID cases that started on August 22, 2022 through cases that started on October 11, 2022. Paid administrative leave for COVID that is readjusted will be considered one (1) of the two (2) qualifying incidents for the 2022-2023 school year. To qualify for retroactive paid administrative leave for testing positive for COVID and having to isolate as mandated by the CDC, one of the following conditions shall be met:

- Employee provides proof of a positive PCR test; or
- Employee provides documentation from a medical provider indicating that they had a positive diagnosis and the date of the test; or
- Employee provides past written communication where they notified their principal, supervisor, or a school health provider that they were absent due to testing positive for COVID. Email and text are acceptable as long as they have a date; or
- The employee's supervisor provides a written statement that the employee informed them or a school health provider they were absent due to COVID.

The documentation to have sick leave balances readjusted must be submitted electronically [HERE](#) or by visiting: <https://forms.gle/ga5t4pHDz6ZN7kjC8> no later than Tuesday, October 25, 2022.

The readjustment will not be immediate, and employees should expect an approximate 30-day turnaround time. This will vary based on volume.

The number of paid days provided by HCPSS to the employee is subject to change if the CDC changes and/or reduces its mandate on the isolation period relating to COVID infection.

A list of Frequently Asked Questions regarding this leave can be found below. As more questions are received and answered, the document will be updated online and can be accessed [here](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. If my child or a family member in my household tested positive, would I qualify for paid administrative leave?

No. Paid administrative leave is only available for the employee and is not extended to family members.

2. When does the six (6) day count begin?

Paid administrative leave begins with the date of the test. If you tested positive on Monday but did not get your results back until Tuesday, Monday will be the start of your paid administrative leave. In this case, the leave would run from Monday through Saturday. If you test positive on a Thursday, your paid leave would be Thursday through Tuesday.

3. Do weekends, holidays, and non-school days count?

Yes. The CDC requires an isolation period of up to 5 consecutive days following the date of the positive test, which includes weekends, holidays, and non-school days. Although you are not paid for the weekend or non-school days, those days count towards the quarantine period. Refer to your respective master agreement regarding the days you are compensated for.

4. What if I am unable to get a PCR test, can I submit a home test?

No. Home tests will not be accepted. There are free testing sites in Howard County where you can receive a PCR test.

5. I received a digital test result that does not have my name, the testing date, and/or the testing result, can I still qualify for paid administrative leave?

No. You will need to ask the testing location for documentation that includes your name, the testing date, and your testing result.

6. What if I feel better during my isolation period or am asymptomatic, can I return to work?

No, to mitigate the transmission and protect staff and students, you may not return to the workplace prior to the end of your isolation period. The isolation period is regardless of symptoms and is five (5) full days. This is per CDC guidance.

7. Why did I not receive all six (6) days?

The six (6) days include your testing date, weekends, holidays, and non-school days. Since workweeks are only 5 days, no employee will ever receive six days of paid administrative leave for an isolation period.

8. Why do I have to use sick leave or other accrued leave if I am unable to return after the isolation period?

HCPSS is providing paid administrative leave due to the CDC requiring five (5) days of isolation after testing positive for COVID. If after this isolation period, you are unable to return to the workplace, HCPSS provides staff members with sick leave each school year to use for illnesses.

9. I am a temporary employee or not eligible for benefits, do I still get paid administrative leave if I test positive for COVID?

No. The paid administrative leave is only offered to permanent and benefit-eligible employees.

10. Why do I have to perform work-related tasks assigned by my supervisor while in isolation?

Paid administrative leave is being offered to employees due to the guidance provided by the CDC regarding isolation. Because you are being paid, it is expected that you participate in ensuring the continuity of instruction or operations. If you are too ill to perform work-related tasks, HCPSS provides permanent and benefit-eligible employees with sick leave each school year for illnesses.

11. I tested positive for COVID prior to August 22, 2022, why can I not qualify for the readjustment period?

In collaboration with our labor partners, August 22, 2022, was the agreed-upon date that the retroactive period would begin. COVID-positive instances outside of this window will not be considered.

12. If I can qualify for up to a total of 12 days of paid administrative leave, why does it matter how many times I get COVID or how I use the days?

HCPSS is providing paid administrative leave due to the CDC requiring up to five (5) days of isolation after testing positive for COVID. In collaboration with our labor partners, it has been agreed that employees will receive a maximum of two (2) incidents or events for up to a six (6) day maximum per incident.

13. For the retroactive sick pay, am I responsible for canceling the sick day entry into Workday?

Yes, once the administrative pay is entered, you will need to cancel the sick days you originally entered to prevent a discrepancy with your sick leave balances.

14. If I contract COVID a third time and require an isolation period of five (5) full days, but only was compensated for three (3) days in a previous event, can I use the days that I did not receive compensation in the third event?

No, there is no storing of days to be used at a later date. HCPSS is providing up to six (6) days of paid administrative leave for a maximum of two (2) incidents.

15. Can I receive a test in the school room or other HCPSS work locations?

No, health services is not providing PCR tests at the schoolhouses, and the rapid test is not accepted. HCPSS will not be offering employee testing at its work locations. Employees are encouraged to utilize one of the free testing facilities located throughout Howard County.

16. If I contract COVID a third time and require an isolation period of five (5) full days, but only used three (3) days of paid administrative leave in one of my prior incidents, can I switch to sick leave for one of the shorter periods and use the paid administrative leave for the longer incident?

No, there will be no adjustment later in the year to change the leave type used.

17. Should I bring my test results to work to show my supervisor?

No, if you test positive for COVID, you should not come to the work location until you have isolated for five (5) days after your positive test. You should contact your supervisor to discuss the preferred method of submitting documentation within your isolation period.

18. Will I be able to use COVID leave if I am a close contact and don't feel comfortable coming to work?

No, the CDC does not require an individual to quarantine due to being a close contact, regardless of vaccine status. If you are a close contact, you are able to continue to work in person. If you become symptomatic, you should not attend work and get tested for COVID.

19. What happens if I miss the retro October 25, 2022, deadline or do not submit my PCR test within my isolation period for future cases?

If you miss the October 25, 2022, readjustment deadline, your sick leave will remain in place and you will not receive an adjustment of your sick leave balance. If you miss submitting your test results during the isolation period, your submission will not be eligible for COVID leave and your sick leave will remain in place.

20. Am I eligible for COVID leave if my position does not allow for telework?

Yes. All permanent and benefit-eligible employees are eligible to receive paid administrative leave due to a positive PCR test for COVID. If your position does not allow you to telework, your supervisor might assign you other tasks that can be completed at home, such as compliance training and professional development training. Failure to complete assigned tasks will result in you being charged sick leave.

21. I am scheduled to return from a long term leave of absence and cannot because I am isolating due to COVID, do I qualify for paid administrative leave?

No, staff members who get COVID while on long term leaves of absence do not qualify for paid administrative leave.

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