

March 9, 2020

Team Merriam:

Although the current risk for COVID-19 in Johnson County is low, protecting the health and well-being of you (Team Merriam) as well as members in our community is a priority. I want to share the plans City Leadership has made to help guide us through the upcoming weeks so you are well informed.

You may have heard a Merriam employee is self-quarantining in accordance with CDC guidelines after a trip out of the country. This is simply a precautionary measure. This employee has not tested positive for COVID-19 and is not currently experiencing any symptoms. However, out of an abundance of caution, the City is working with our custodial crews to conduct a deep cleaning of our facilities.

Beyond this, the City is following the CDC's [recommendations for businesses](#), and we've developed additional internal policies and guidelines that are outlined below.

- **SYMPTOMS:** Similar to the flu, symptoms can include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, and may appear 2-14 days after exposure. You can learn more about COVID-19 and what to look for on the [CDC's website](#). Please be attentive to these symptoms in yourself and those around you, and seek medical attention if you develop these symptoms AND you've been in close contact with someone who is known to have COVID-19 or reside in or have recently traveled to an area with an ongoing spread of COVID-19.
- **MEDICAL ATTENTION:** The City of Merriam provides free tele-health services to all employees and their families who are covered by the City's insurance through [First Stop Health](#). This is a great resource to use if you are sick with other ailments and want to avoid going to a doctor's office, or if you want to seek initial medical advice regarding possible COVID-19 symptoms. If you do need to go to the doctor for possible COVID-19 symptoms, the CDC advises you call ahead to make the necessary arrangements.
- **SICK LEAVE:** For an initial period of 60 days beginning today, the City of Merriam is adjusting its sick leave policies for those who may become impacted by COVID-19.
 - **MOST IMPORTANT: if you are sick, please stay home.** Period. This is the City's general policy for illness, regardless of cause, but it's especially important right now.
 - If you are out for a COVID-19 related matter (personal illness, quarantine per CDC guidelines, taking care of an ill family member, or childcare issues related to school or personal daycare closures) and your position provides you with the opportunity to work from home, please work with your supervisor to make necessary arrangements. Otherwise, notify your supervisor that your absence is COVID-19 related and sick time will be used to cover your absence.
 - If you run out of sick time and need additional time off related to a COVID-19 absence, the City will grant you additional paid sick time to cover the absence. Additional paid sick time will *only* be granted for COVID-19 related absences.
 - Following this 60-day period, the City will review all COVID-19 related absences for sick leave abuse.
 - This adjusted policy applies only to individuals who earn sick leave under normal circumstances.

- Please keep in mind that COVID-19 related absences are still covered by HIPPA, and we should not be discussing specific employees or details of absences, no matter their cause. If you have questions or need guidance, please contact HR.

- **PERSONAL HYGIENE:** The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. There are some everyday preventative actions that can help with this, including: avoid close contact with people who are sick; avoid touching your face; wash your hands often with soap and for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. The CDC does not currently recommend wearing facemasks for people who are well. For more information, review the [CDC Guidelines for Prevention and Treatment](#).

- **CLEANING:** The CDC is not currently recommending additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning at time. However, the City will continue to work with our custodial crews to conduct deep cleaning of city facilities as warranted. We encourage you to regularly disinfect work areas, especially ones that are regularly utilized by the public – this includes work stations, countertops, and door knobs.

Again, I want to emphasize that we are sharing this information to help you be informed and attentive. **Please remain vigilant, wash hands often, and stay home if you don't feel well.** We will continue to monitor the situation and make announcements and adjustments as needed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your supervisor or our HR Manager Stephanie Thompson.

Thanks for all you do for the City.

Chris Engel
City Administrator