



## Return to Normal Operations Plan

The response to COVID-19 and Governor McMaster's executive orders required an immediate and drastic shift in PEBA business operations. This has been and will continue to be an unprecedented event. Along with the rest of the world, we found ourselves in a situation without a direct and concise plan of action. Effective March 20, approximately 75 percent of our workforce began telecommuting, and a very small, limited staff began covering absolute minimal requirements to keep business running and services continuing. Fortunately, we have managed to maintain core functionality with a dedicated staff.

As we approach week eight of the current structure, we must begin adjusting our operating status for a controllable, steady return to normal operations while also ensuring the safety of our workforce. The varying and sometimes confusing guidance from available sources makes it difficult to plan with certainty. We must adapt and form a plan to return to normal operations that is as consistent as possible with official guidance while also meeting the demands of PEBA business.

On March 19, 2020 Governor McMaster issued Executive Order 2020-11. For the purposes of this Order, essential employees and staff are those identified as such by the Agency Head or their designee. These employees include those that are essential or mission-critical to the State's ongoing preparation for and response to emergency conditions related to COVID-19 or otherwise necessary to serving the State of South Carolina by ensuring the continuity of critical operations of state government. Essential employee may be defined differently than it has been defined or applied in the context of hazardous weather events. PEBA must remain open and continue to provide services to the public. Given the duration of this event and the need to maintain operations, all PEBA employees are considered essential at this time.

In response to the duration of this event and in preparation for the phased return to normal operations, we have worked diligently to procure and issue many additional laptops. Through strategic laptop distribution we have been able to expand telecommuting and increase the effectiveness of social distancing as employees return to the office.

To ensure continuity in delivery of PEBA services and protect the health and safety of our workforce we will use the following phases and protocols to return to normal operations over the next few months.

### PRE-PHASE

Managers should do an assessment of the physical layout of their areas. In preparation for the return of some employees, managers should identify any needs associated with maintaining social distancing or infection control such as additional space needs, physical barriers (i.e. sneeze shields), signage, etc. If needed, channel requests to the necessary departments.

## PHASE I

Effective May 12, 2020

**Employees who have PEBA issued laptops** and are able to successfully perform PEBA business from home or other alternate workspace will continue to telework full-time.

**Employees without laptops** will begin reporting to work during designated times. Managers will coordinate a rotating system whereby half of their employees will report to work each day. Managers may adopt any rotating schedule that meets the needs of their area. Employees will continue to telework on days they are not in the office.

Some areas will begin shifting delivery of services. Employer Services should begin developing, publishing and hosting online education. The Visitor Center should continue to assist the Contact Center in taking calls and should begin to conduct counseling via video conference.

Employees may dress casually during this phase of return.

## PHASE I.5

Effective June 1, 2020

**Employees who have PEBA issued laptops** and are able to successfully perform PEBA business from home or other alternate workspace may continue to telework full-time. Some exceptions apply for departments requiring the physical presence of staff.

**Employees without laptops** will begin reporting to work their regularly scheduled hours Monday through Friday. Training opportunities are no longer considered a work-from-home option.

Managers, regardless of ability to telecommute, should report to the office as necessary based on the need for supervision, the existing workload of the area, and number of subordinate employees reporting to work.

Employees may continue to dress casually.

## PHASE II

TBD

**Employees who have PEBA issued laptops** and are able to perform PEBA business from home or other alternate workspace will continue to telework according to a telework agreement. Managers should be prepared to implement telecommuting agreements while maintaining an adequate staffing level for their departments. Managers and telecommuting employees should review the Telecommuting Policy and complete and submit a Telecommuting Agreement to HR. During this phase, as part of the Telecommuting Agreement, employees must be scheduled to report to the office at least one day per week. Employees may continue to telecommute according to their agreement.

Managers should be prepared to submit Remote Operating Procedures for their telecommuting staff to HR for approval. Remote Operating Procedures should outline how the manager and employee will ensure regular communication and how employee performance will be monitored.

## PHASE III

TBD

The Visitor Center reopens and will begin seeing visitors by appointment.

All employees are eligible to return to the office.

Employees should return to normal business casual dress.

## Building protocol

Beginning the weekend of May 2, the entire building will be cleaned and disinfected by a cleaning service. Deep cleaning will continue on the weekends as needed. Throughout the week, daily cleaning will continue.

As we return to normal operations and as more employees are reporting to the office, we must remain vigilant to minimize and control the impact of COVID-19 in our workplace. The following practices should be used until further notice:

- Employees must maintain social distancing of six feet or more at all times. Employees should not congregate in any location. Break rooms and access to refrigerators will remain open, but employees must maintain social distancing.
- Employees should regularly clean frequently touched surfaces in their personal workspace. A bin of cleaning supplies is located at every copier.
- Employees must clean communal equipment such as copiers, microfilm machines, etc. after every use. A bin of cleaning supplies is located at every copier.
- Face coverings must be worn in all areas except while in an employee's personal workspace. Face coverings will be provided to each employee upon reporting to the building. Cloth face coverings should be taken home, laundered, and reused as needed.
- Latex gloves are not required to be worn but are available for discretionary employee use. Gloves will be available in a central location in every department.
- Meetings should be conducted via teleconference or videoconference only.

## Temperature checks

Employees reporting to work should take their temperature daily. If a fever is indicated, employees are asked to stay or go home and check in with a supervisor. PEBA has an infrared thermometer available in the second floor break room for staff to use. Employees should disinfect using the provided supplies before and after use of the thermometer.

## Employee illness

Employees who have symptoms should stay at home until symptoms resolve; however negative COVID-19 testing is **not** required for people to return to work. Even workers who were confirmed to have COVID-19 do **not** have to have negative testing to return to work.

Employees with COVID-19 or who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been caring for a family member with COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 and were directed to care for themselves at home should not return to work until the following conditions have been met:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and,**
- At least 7 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*.

If an employee becomes sick during the day, they should be sent home immediately, and Human Resources should be notified. Surfaces in their workspace will be cleaned and disinfected. Information on staff who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms, and 2 days prior to symptoms, will be compiled. Others with close contact within 6 feet of the employee during this time would be considered exposed. If the employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, fellow employees will be notified of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. Confidentiality, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), will be maintained.

## Travel

Business travel of any kind is suspended until further notice.

## Telecommuting Policy and procedures

See policy, forms and requirements

## Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act and Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act

The Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act allows state employees to take up to 80 hours of paid sick leave for one of six qualifying reasons listed below. This includes employees who do not currently earn leave including temporary, temporary grant and time-limited employees. Employees are eligible from their first day of employment.

1. The employee is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID–19.
2. The employee has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID–19.
3. The employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID–19 and seeking a medical diagnosis.
4. The employee is caring for an individual who is subject to an order as described in paragraph 1 or has been advised as described in paragraph 2. Please note that the person being cared for does not have to be related to the employee for the employee to qualify for leave.
5. The employee is caring for a son or daughter of such employee if the school or place of care of the son or daughter has been closed, or the child care provider of such son or daughter is unavailable, due to COVID–19 precautions.
6. The employee is experiencing any other substantially similar condition specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of Labor.

The Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act amends and expands the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), on a temporary basis, to provide qualifying employees 12 weeks of leave if the employee is unable to work, including work-from-home, due to the need to care for the employee’s child (under 18 years of age) if the child’s school or place of care is closed or the child care provider is unavailable due to a public health emergency.

For more information or if an employee believes they qualify for leave under one or both of these emergency acts, please contact Human Resources.