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Guidance on Administrative Leave and Telework for COVID-19 Purposes



The Department is deeply grateful for the hard work and dedication of our workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also recognize the many challenges that our employees face as they balance their workloads with their personal and family needs during these challenging times.

Administrative Leave for COVID-19 Related Purposes

To promote the health, safety, and well-being of our employees and their families as they advance the critical national security mission of the Department, the Under Secretary for Management authorizes the use of administrative leave for certain situations related to COVID-19 as detailed below.

This authorization applies to U.S. Direct Hire (USDH) Foreign Service and Civil Service employees of the Department of State (including eligible family members on Family Member Appointments (FMA)), eligible family members employed on a Personal Service Agreement (PSA), and Locally Employed (LE) Staff, regardless of whether they are teleworking or reporting to the workplace. Contracts for Personal Services Contractors (PSCs) that do not provide for administrative leave may be amended to grant such leave in accordance with this guidance. PSCs should direct inquiries regarding contract modification to their CORs.

This authorization does not apply to third-party contractors or intermittent employees (e.g. reemployed annuitants/while-actually-employed (REA/WAE)). Third-party contractors should consult with their contract employer and bureau/post COR representatives to determine whether any specific contract provisions apply to their circumstance.

Effective immediately and retroactive to February 16, 2020, supervisors are authorized to grant employees up to 10 hours of administrative leave per week (i.e. excused absence, XA), for a total of up to 20 hours per pay period, until further notice, for the following purposes:

To provide care for children as a result of a lapse in childcare due to COVID-19 related school and daycare closures; To provide care for other dependents (such as an elderly parent or family member) as a result of a COVID-19 related lapse in care arrangements; and

- For health and safety reasons in order to help prevent exposure/transmission of COVID-19, including, but not limited to, taking sanitation measures, preparing for local shelter-in-place orders, and taking personal health/safety measures to facilitate work or telework.

Limitations on Administrative Leave

LE STAFF ONLY: If post's Local Compensation Plan (LCP) already includes paid time off specifically provided

for the purposes described above, the number of administrative leave hours that may be granted to LE Staff under this authorization is limited to the number of hours needed to arrive at a 10-hour per week total. If the LCP already includes benefits that exceed what is provided here, then no additional paid time off is authorized. If post believes that providing the administrative leave, as described above, precipitates acquired rights concerns (e.g., post would have to provide a comparable benefit unrelated to COVID-19), post is instructed to reach out to GTM/OE before providing leave based on this authorization. In every case, post must clearly document in writing to LE Staff that this additional leave is provided only for a limited period of time due to the exceptional circumstances of COVID-19. This authorization has no impact on benefits currently provided per post's LCP, and post does not have to revise its LCP to grant administrative leave under this authorization.

ALL EMPLOYEES: The granting of administrative leave is pro-rated for part-time employees based on the number of hours in the part-time schedule compared to a full-time schedule. For example, an employee with a 40-hour pay period work requirement (50% of full-time) would be eligible for 10 hours of administrative leave in a pay period.

Requests for Administrative Leave

- We recognize that employees' personal situations can change rapidly in the current environment. When circumstances permit, employees must request use of administrative leave from their supervisor in advance via telephone, e-mail, or other approved communication. If unable to submit a request in advance, employees must contact their supervisor as soon as possible, and document the hours of administrative leave used.
- To ensure accurate accounting, employees must also submit form DS-7100 or OPM-71 requesting administrative leave to their supervisor either before use or immediately upon their return to work or earlier if possible.
- Those who have already used annual leave, compensatory time off, or leave without pay since February 16, 2020 for COVID-19 related purposes as described in paragraph 2 above, may submit a DS-7100 or [OPM-71](#) to their supervisor requesting approval to convert that used leave to administrative leave in accordance with and subject to the limitations in this notice.
- Both employees and managers are responsible for ensuring accurate use and reporting of administrative leave for each pay period.
- **Timekeepers:** Administrative leave should be reported as "XA" in WinT&A and WebTATEL. Timekeepers should enter retroactive time as corrections to the previous pay periods as needed.

Proper use of Administrative Leave vs. Sick Leave

Employees should not request administrative leave for circumstances for which sick leave would be applicable. In other words, administrative leave should not be granted in lieu of sick leave, or in instances where use of sick leave is appropriate. This grant of administrative leave is directed at situations where sick leave is not available to address the circumstance.

Example: If an employee is caring for a dependent who is healthy, administrative leave would be appropriate. However, should the dependent become ill, then the employee must then request sick leave (or, for LE Staff, other personal leave as authorized in post's LCP) to care for the dependent.

Telework

Employees who must perform work that their Assistant Secretary has determined to be mission-critical and that must be performed in the workplace should remain in the workplace only as long as necessary to complete their mission-critical function. In order to reduce the risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19, the Department continues to emphasize the importance of maximizing telework to the greatest extent practicable.

- If you are a telework-ready employee, you should be teleworking unless there is a critical mission need for you to be at the office. In such an event, you should be in the office for the minimum amount of time needed to complete your work.
- If you are a telework-eligible employee who has not yet signed a telework agreement, but you are capable of teleworking from home (i.e. have the necessary equipment, internet connection, etc.), SIGN UP for a telework agreement! Reducing the number of people coming into the office to only those that really cannot perform their work remotely helps to minimize risk to all employees and their families.
- You may access your work account through GO Browser (<https://myapps.microsoft.com>) and GO Virtual (<https://go.state.gov>). Please contact IRM if you have any questions.
- If you are a supervisor with telework-ready and/or telework-eligible employees, your DEFAULT posture should be maximum telework for everyone capable of doing so, unless there is a critical mission need for someone to be in the office to perform work that cannot be performed remotely.

Supervisors should ensure that telework-ready employees have sufficient work to fulfill their regular duty hours. If sufficient work is not available to assign to a telework-ready employee to meet their regular duty hours, and that employee is not required to perform mission-critical work in the office, the supervisor can grant weather and safety leave to U.S. Direct Hires for those regular duty hours for which there is insufficient remote work to assign. For LE Staff and eligible family members on PSAs, the Chief of Mission may authorize excused absence.

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