GSA OIG Workplace Safety Plan

Last Updated November 2022

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OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Updates in This Version

- Consistent with CDC guidance, COVID-19 workplace safety protocols will not vary based on vaccination status or otherwise depend on vaccination information.
- Safer Federal Workforce Task Force and GSA OIG guidance relies on CDC COVID-19 Community Levels county-level data to determine appropriate prevention strategies to use.
- Protocols have been updated consistent with revised CDC guidance and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance on vaccinations, travel, post-exposure precautions, and symptom screening.

Purpose

This plan provides the steps the General Services Administration (GSA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) is taking to ensure a safe workplace for all civilian and contractor employees. GSA OIG leadership is closely monitoring government policy changes, Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, and all public health advancements and will continue to update these procedures as appropriate. The health and welfare of each GSA OIG employee and contractor is paramount in the decisions made pursuant to these procedures.

This document provides additional OIG-specific policies and guidelines for COVID-19 Workplace safety. These guidelines are **in addition to** the following related authorities:

- GSA COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan and related policies as documented within;
- M-21-15 COVID-19 Safe Federal Workplace: Agency Model Safety Principles;
- Executive Order 13991, Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing;
- CDC guidelines; and
- Local health departments and authorities.

COVID-19 Coordination Team   UPDATED

The Inspector General convened a taskforce in April 2020 to develop guidelines and a framework for the GSA OIG to return to facilities. The taskforce's goal was to create policies and establish structure for employees' safe return to facilities across all workforce.

In January 2021, under guidance from OMB M-21-15, the taskforce updated its name to the COVID-19 Coordination Team. Its members are:

1. Inspector General
2. Deputy Inspector General
3. Associate Inspector General
4. Counsel to the Inspector General
5. Assistant Inspector General for Investigations
6. Assistant Inspector General for Auditing
7. Assistant Inspector General for Inspections
8. Assistant Inspector General for Administration

GSA OIG's COVID-19 Coordination Team is responsible for:
1. Reviewing compliance with agency COVID-19 workplace safety plans, protocols, and policies;
2. Implementing revisions to agency COVID-19 workplace safety plans, protocols, and policies consistent with Safer Federal Workforce Task Force and CDC guidance;
3. Ensuring compliance with agency COVID-19 safety plans, protocols and policies are broadly communicated to agency employees, onsite contractor employees, visitors, and attendees at agency-hosted meetings, events, and conferences;
4. Evaluating any other operational needs related to COVID-19 workplace safety; and
5. Coordinating all decisions with Facility Security Committees and the General Services Administration (GSA) as needed.

COVID-19 Community Levels

GSA OIG follows the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force and CDC guidance to incorporate the levels of community transmission into the OIG's processes and protocols. When determining levels of community transmission, the OIG references the [CDC COVID-19 Integrated County View](#) tracker. A streamlined version depicting [community transmission levels for OIG regional offices](#) is available on the OIG intranet.

The OIG's mask-wearing guidance incorporates this data and is based on where a facility is located. This data is gathered and published each Thursday afternoon by the CDC. The intranet page for community transmission levels in OIG regions is updated with the last CDC update by Friday afternoon each week, to be effective for the following week starting on Monday.

Employees on official travel are responsible for knowing the community level for the local area where the federal facility in which they are working is located and following those local and facility guidelines.

Overview of Federal Facility COVID-10 Safety Protocols by COVID-19 Community Level   NEW

Safety Protocols	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Federal employee vaccination requirement	No*	No*	No*
Require documentation of vaccination status from employees or ask about vaccination status of onsite contractor employees and visitors	Paused	Paused	Paused
Mask-wearing, regardless of vaccination status	No	No	Yes
Screening testing programs	Paused	Paused	Paused
Symptom screening self-checks for all individuals prior to entry to Federal facilities	Yes	Yes	Yes
If known to be exposed to COVID-19 to wear a mask, take other precautions, and watch for symptoms for 10 full days after exposure. Must be tested at least 5	Yes	Yes	Yes

Safety Protocols	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
full days after last exposure.			
Follow agency isolation protocols and take other precautions consistent with CDC guidance.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Consider physically distancing from others and avoiding crowding in indoor common areas, meeting rooms, and high-risk settings.	No	Yes	Yes
Agencies to make and maintain improvements to indoor ventilation and air filtration to the maximum extent possible.	Yes	Yes	Yes

Given a nationwide injunction, no implementation or enforcement until further notice.

Vaccinations   UPDATED

Employees are no longer required to attest to their vaccination status. Reasonable accommodations related to COVID-19 vaccinations are not necessary due to the nationwide preliminary injunction.

To ensure compliance with an applicable nationwide preliminary injunction, which may be supplemented, modified, or vacated, depending on the course of ongoing litigation, GSA OIG will take no action to implement or enforce the COVID-19 vaccination requirement pursuant to Executive Order 14043 on Requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Federal Employees. Any aspects of this COVID-19 Workplace Safety plan related to the vaccination requirement pursuant to E.O. 14043 are not in effect and will not be implemented or enforced by agencies while the injunction is in place.

To ensure compliance with an applicable nationwide injunction, GSA OIG will take no action to implement and enforce E.O. 14042 on Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors. For existing contracts or contract-like instruments that contain a clause implementing requirements of E.O. 14042, absent further written notice from GSA OIG.

Vaccination-Related Leave

Employees may request administrative leave to get a non-required COVID-19 vaccination shot or a booster shot for themselves or to take a family member (as defined in 5 CFR 630.201) to be vaccinated. Employees may be granted up to four hours of administrative leave per shot. Supervisory approval is required prior to scheduling the administrative leave, which should be recorded as "Other Paid Absence" on timesheets.

Employees may also request up to two days of administrative leave if they cannot work due to an adverse reaction to the vaccination or a booster. Two days total can be used per dose.

Vaccination Documentation and Information   NEW

Workplace safety protocols currently do not vary based on vaccination status or otherwise depend on vaccination information.

Information collected to date from employees about their vaccination status is preserved in accordance with the Federal Records Act and other records requirements.

Mask-Wearing UPDATED

Updated federal guidance bases mask requirements on local COVID Community Levels.

Community Level	Mask Status
Low	Optional
Medium	Optional
High	Mandatory for all employees, contractor employees, and visitors who are 2 years or older – Must use a high-quality mask such as a surgical mask, KN95, N95, or a respirator

Employees should also follow federal or commercial building policies and local government policies which require stricter safety protocols.

Employees may continue to wear a mask while working in the office. Masks must follow CDC guidelines. Masks must be free of offensive language, graphics, or other patterns that may be seen as offensive by others. A limited number of masks are available at each OIG office if needed by employees or visitors. The use of homemade masks is authorized but the masks must fall in line with CDC recommendations and guidelines and are not permitted when COVID-19 community levels are high and mask-wearing mandatory.

Employees must wear high-quality masks or respirators when in Government-operated aircraft, boats and other maritime transportation conveyances, and buses with multiple occupants. Mask-wearing is not required for outdoor areas of conveyance, if there is a single occupant, or if the occupants are all cohabitants.

In Government-operated vans, cars, trucks, and other motor pool passenger vehicles, employees are recommended to wear high-quality masks or respirators when there are multiple occupants.

Screening Testing

The OIG COVID-19 Testing Program has been suspended. This includes the suspension of OIG Policy 447.00. This policy may be reinstated if federal regulations mandate.

All employees are encouraged to test for COVID-19 before returning to the office after travel for the safety of other employees in the office.

OIG employees are encouraged to continue to hold meetings virtually whenever possible.

Official Travel

There are no government-wide limits on official travel for federal employees, regardless of their vaccination status. All employees who travel must follow CDC health and safety guidelines while traveling. These guidelines should be followed before, during, and after official travel. Component Heads have final approval on official travel decisions and arrangements for employees.

Travel for Individuals with Known Exposure   NEW

Asymptomatic individuals with known exposure within the past 10 days may travel and follow additional precautions consistent with CDC guidance:

1. Wear a high-quality mask the entire time on-duty and around others;
2. Do not travel on public transportation if unable to wear a high-quality mask and around others;
3. Follow all post-exposure protocols, including testing requirements which may need to occur while on travel.

Travel for Individuals with COVID-19 Symptoms or a Positive COVID-19 Test   NEW

Individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms and are waiting for a diagnostic test results are not permitted to travel. Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 for at least 5 full days after their first day of symptoms or after the date of a positive diagnostic test for asymptomatic individuals also are not permitted to travel.

If after official travel has been approved, an individual's COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, the individual must not undertake further official travel, including any under previously approved travel authorization.

Meetings, Events, and Conferences   UPDATED

OIG employees are encouraged to continue to hold meetings virtually whenever possible. Face-to-face meetings are no longer restricted but should only be held with the safety of participants in mind.

All in-person attendees must comply with relevant COVID-19 safety protocols, including as it relates to any mask-wearing when COVID-19 Community Levels are HIGH.

Symptom Screening   UPDATED

Employees should conduct a health self-assessment, to include taking their temperature, before returning to the office each day. Pursuant to CDC guidance, employees exhibiting signs of COVID-19 infection should self-report to their supervisor, stay home and contact their physician. If employees are ill, they are encouraged stay home.

Employees who begin to feel ill or develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while in the

office must immediately wear a high-quality mask or respirator, report this to their supervisor, and promptly leave the workplace.

If an individual suspects they may have COVID-19 because of new or unexplained symptoms consistent with COVID-19, but has not been tested or has not received test results, they should not enter a Federal workplace until conclusive test results have been received.

Post-Exposure Precautions NEW

The CDC no longer recommends quarantining at home if an asymptomatic individual has a known exposure to someone with COVID-19.

Individuals who are known to have been exposed to COVID-19 regardless of their vaccination status, are instructed to:
1. Wear a high-quality mask or respirator while indoors or interacting with others as part of official responsibilities;
2. Take extra precautions when they are around high-risk individuals while onsite at an agency workplace; and
3. Watch for COVID-19 symptoms for 10 full days from the date of their last known exposure.

If an employee has been onsite at their official duty location and later receives a confirmed-positive COVID diagnosis or begins feeling symptoms of COVID-19, they are encouraged to notify their supervisor to coordinate with GSA or JPF for cleaning services and follow GSA's standard operating procedure for reporting a COVID-19 exposure. GSA OIG will follow internal procedures for reporting a positive COVID diagnosis or the onset of COVID symptoms.

Employees who are known to have been exposed to COVID-19 and are onsite at an agency workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities are required to be tested for current infection at least five (5) full days after their last known exposure. If employees are not working onsite at an agency workplace or interacting with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities within 10 days of the known exposure, they are not required to be tested.

Isolation and Post-Isolation Precautions

The CDC's guidance for isolation due to COVID-19 should be followed by all employees when they are known to have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status.

Employees in a telework-eligible position are required to telework for the duration of their isolation period or take sick leave or other paid leave to account for their time. Employees who

are not in a telework-eligible position may use weather and safety leave for the duration of their quarantine period, pending supervisory notification and approval.

The CDC has released guidance for quarantine and isolation due to COVID-19. Updated guidance found at [Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19](#) (CDC). An isolation and exposure calculator may be found at the CDC link above.

Returning to Working Onsite at an Agency Workplace   NEW
Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 and:
- Never developed symptoms may return to the agency workplace after 5 full days following their positive COVID-19 test.

OR

- Have had symptoms may return to the agency workplace after 5 full days from the onset of symptoms once they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms are improving. (The loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.)

If an individual had a moderate or severe illness (shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or hospitalization) due to COVID-19 or have a weakened immune system, the individual may delay returning to working onsite or interacting with members of the public for a full 10 days. These individuals are advised to consult their healthcare providers for further guidance.

All individuals who return to the workplace after completing their isolation are instructed to continue taking additional precautions for at least 10 full days after their first day of symptoms (after the date of a positive viral test for asymptomatic individuals). These include wearing a high-quality mask or respirator around others and avoiding common-use and high-frequency areas where others may be unmasked, such as a cafeteria or fitness center.

Confidentiality and Privacy
All medical information received from personnel, including vaccination information, test results and any other information obtained as a result of testing and symptom monitoring under previous guidelines, will be treated in accordance with applicable law and policies on confidentiality and privacy, and will be accessible only by those with a need to know. All information will be stored in accordance with records management procedures.

Questions or concerns about the personal medical information or the handling of personally identifiable information collected will be addressed by the GSA OIG Employee Relations Officer.

Workplace Operations

Improving Ventilation and Air Filtration

GSA OIG follows GSA guidance with regard to ventilation and air filtration. GSA developed and revised heating, ventilating, and air conditioning guidance for all GSA-controlled buildings to reflect current CDC recommendations on workplace ventilation.

For the GSA OIG's regional offices, new ventilation methods have increased outdoor ventilation and fresh air to meet new CDC recommendations. These activities are led by GSA.

For leased office space, the GSA OIG is working with building maintenance to ensure safety measures are taken to address a safe transition back to the office.

Facilitating Physical Distancing and Avoiding Crowding

Employees are no longer required to practice the physical distancing protocol in low community transmission areas. Employees in areas where COVID-19 community levels are MEDIUM or HIGH should consider distancing in common or high use areas.

Employees in all GSA OIG offices must follow guidelines from local building managers.

Telework and Remote Work

Supervisors should be mindful of external circumstances for employees such as underlying health conditions for the employee and/or their household member(s), dependent care issues, and public transportation issues when determining telework activities. Employees currently teleworking on a frequent or regular basis will be given advance notice and guidance before returning to the physical workplace. Employees are encouraged to continue to hold virtual meetings using approved OIG IT tools.

Checking In

Employees must check in each morning they work and report whether they are working in the office or teleworking. To do this, employees should use the Workforce Readiness Application, which was developed to capture information that will keep OIG management informed when employees work in the office. This information will be used when we need to contact employees who may have worked in an area that is exposed to COVID-19.

Work Area Maintenance   NEW

Due to the possible need to clean work areas should an employee in the area test positive for COVID-19, work surfaces should be cleared of clutter at the end of work hours. Employees should also avoid keeping food at their desk after work hours to help keep the area free from pests.

Cleaning supplies will be provided in each office and can be used to wipe down surfaces

after use. This includes work surfaces such as desks and keyboards, shared technology tools such as telephones and printers, and high-touch surfaces like doorknobs and light switches. Cleaning supplies purchased by the agency are to be used only in the office and should not be taken home for personal use.

Collective Bargaining Obligations NEW

The GSA OIG does not have any collective bargaining obligations.

Exceptions NEW

Pursuant to Executive Order 13991, Federal agencies, employees, and onsite contractors must follow CDC guidance related to certain settings where different or additional layers of prevention are recommended by the CDC, including travel and the indoor transportation corridor. Where there is a conflict with more general Task Force or CDC guidance, agencies must follow the setting-specific CDC guidance.

In addition, to be consistent with Task Force guidance, where a locality has imposed additional pandemic-related requirements more protective than those in Task Force guidance, workplace safety plans, or working in the office guidelines, federal employees and onsite contractors would need to follow those additional local requirements in Federal buildings, in Federally controlled worksites, on Government-operated transportation conveyances, and on Federal land in that locality.