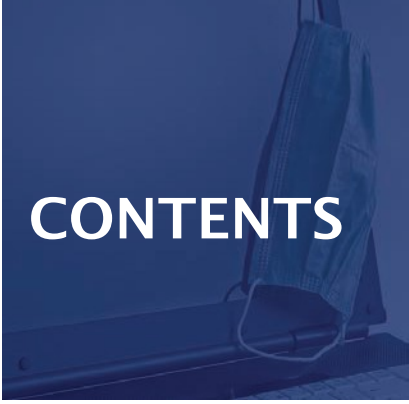


State Board for Technical  
and  
Comprehensive Education



Guide for **Returning**  
*to the*  
**Workplace**

*Effective March 15, 2021*



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# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education (SBTCE) protocols for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic are being established for the overall safety and well-being of our employees and the public in which we interact.

The primary goals for SBTCE’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic are to protect employee and public health and continue the organization’s vital mission of providing learning opportunities that promote the economic and human resource development of the state.

SBTCE’s plans will be aligned and consistent with local orders and ordinances of the accelerateSC *Re-entry Plan for State Employees* and the *COVID-19 Back-to-Work Checklist*. SBTCE’s plans will also follow recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), SC Department of Administration Division of State Human Resources (DSHR), SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC), and the SBTCE Task Force.



## The SC Technical College System



*Our knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve, and our protocols and guidelines will be updated as appropriate as more information becomes available.*



## Workplace Expectations & Guidelines

We must all do our part to protect our personal health and safety, as well as the health and safety of others, both at work and outside of work. As such, all employees are expected to fully comply with the protocols and guidelines set forth by the agency (signage, website, email communications, posters, etc.). As this pandemic situation is still evolving, SBTCE reserves the right to update this information or enforce additional requirements to promote the safety and well-being of employees.

## Symptom Monitoring Requirement

**Employees who have been instructed to return to the workplace are strongly encouraged to conduct symptom self-monitoring every day before reporting to work.** If you are sick or have symptoms of COVID-19 notify a member of the Human Resource Services Division, stay home and do not report to work. Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness like shortness of breath, coughing and/or fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer) are recommended to stay home and not come to work until 10 days have passed since symptoms began **AND** 24 hours must have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines **AND** their other symptoms have improved. For persons with severe to critical illness or who are severely immunocompromised, the recommended time to remain in isolation has been extended to 20 days since symptoms first started.

At this time, these symptoms include one or more of the following:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever or chills
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Fatigue
- Congestion or running nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea



Employees are requested to exercise good judgment and not report to work if they have any of the foregoing symptoms. Sick employees concerned about COVID-19 illness should contact their healthcare provider to discuss the appropriateness of testing.

**When to Seek Emergency Medical Attention:** Look for **emergency warning signs\*** for COVID-19. If someone is showing any of these signs, **seek emergency medical care immediately:**

- Trouble breathing
  - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
  - New confusion
  - Inability to wake or stay awake
- Pale, gray or blue-colored skin, lips or nail beds, depending on skin tone.

\*This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

Based on a detailed review of available evidence to date, CDC has updated and expanded the list of who is at increased risk for getting severely ill from COVID-19. Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions remain at increased risk for severe illness, but now CDC has further defined age-and condition-related risks.

The CDC has removed the specific age threshold from the older adult classification. According to the CDC, among adults, risks increases as you age, and it's not just those over the age 65 who are at increased risk for severe illness. Individuals of any age with the following underlying medical conditions **are at increased risk** of severe illness from COVID-19:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Down Syndrome
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
- Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or higher but < 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>)
- Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
- Sickle cell disease
- Pregnancy
- Smoking
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Currently there are limited data and information about the impact of underlying medical conditions and whether they increase the risk for severe illness from COVID-19. According to the CDC, people with the following conditions **might be at an increased risk** for severe illness from COVID-19:

- Asthma (moderate-to-severe)
- Cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain)
- Cystic fibrosis
- Hypertension or high blood pressure
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines
- Neurologic conditions, such as dementia
- Liver disease
- Pulmonary fibrosis (having damaged or scarred lung tissues)
- Thalassemia (a type of blood disorder)
- Type 1 diabetes mellitus

Employees who have been instructed to return to work on-site and have concerns about doing so due to a medical condition that places them in a higher risk group, those who are pregnant, or those who wish to seek ADA Reasonable Accommodations related to Returning to the Workplace should contact Human Resources Services.



## Social Distancing

Keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to the COVID-19 virus and slowing its spread. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others when possible, even if you have no symptoms. Social distancing is important for everyone, especially to help protect people who are at higher risk of getting sick. Employees working on-site should follow these social distancing practices:

- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arm lengths) and wear a cloth face covering/disposable mask
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded areas and avoid mass gatherings

Generally, standing in an office doorway provides adequate social distancing between two employees when one employee is sitting at his/her desk. Thus, this typically will be the standard social distancing protocol for offices. Should you enter an individual's office space where social distancing is not feasible, you are strongly encouraged to wear a cloth face covering/disposable mask.

For those occupying cubicle spaces, rotation schedules will be established.





## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) & Personal Safety Practices

**Disposable Face masks/Cloth Face Coverings:** Appropriate use of disposable face masks/cloth face coverings is critical in minimizing risks to others near you. You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. The mask or cloth face covering is not a substitute for social distancing.

Thus, to promote employee safety in the workplace, face masks or face coverings must be worn by all employees in common areas and gatherings of three or more where social distancing measures of 6 feet are difficult to maintain. In gatherings of two the wearing of facial masks is highly encouraged, if social distancing measures of 6 feet are maintained. If employees are unable to maintain 6 feet in an office space, you are highly encouraged to communicate with your colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, instant message, telephone or other available technology rather than face-to-face. You can use a range of available collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, etc.). However, if individuals are alone in their offices, they may choose not to wear a mask.

**Disposable masks will be provided by the agency.**

**DISCLAIMER:** If individuals are unable to wear a mask due to medical reasons, please notify the Human Resource Services Division.

### Use and care of face coverings/disposable mask



#### Putting on the face covering/disposable mask:

- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to handling the face covering/disposable mask.
- Ensure the face covering/disposable mask fits over the nose and under the chin.
- Situate the face covering/disposable mask properly with nose wire snug against the nose (where applicable).
- Tie straps behind the head and neck or loop around the ears.
- Throughout the process: Avoid touching the front of the face covering/disposable mask.

#### Taking off the face covering/disposable mask:

- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when removing the face covering/disposable mask.
- When taking off the face covering/disposable mask, loop your finger into the strap and pull the strap away from the ear, or untie the straps.
- Wash hands immediately after removing.

### **Care, storage and laundering:**

- Protect face coverings/disposable mask by storing in a plastic bag, when not in use.
- Cloth face coverings may not be used more than one day at a time and must be washed after use. Cloth face coverings should be properly laundered with regular clothing detergent before first use, and after each shift. Cloth face coverings should be replaced immediately if soiled, damaged (e.g., ripped, punctured) or visibly contaminated.
- Disposable masks must not be used for more than one day and should be placed in the trash after your shift or if it is soiled, damaged (e.g., stretched ear loops, torn or punctured material) or visibly contaminated.

## **Workplace Modifications**

To promote employee safety and well-being, the SBTCE will make a number of workplace modifications appropriate to maintain social distancing. Practices related to PPE and cleaning will be posted throughout the building and divisions.

**Signage:** To maintain employee health and well-being, signage related to social distancing, safety, hygiene and COVID-19 have been posted throughout the building and/or divisions. Additionally, signage limiting the number of individuals in offices and conference rooms are posted.

**Hand Sanitizer:** To promote employee health and safety, the SBTCE will be providing hand sanitizer and hand sanitizing stations have been placed throughout the building and/or divisions.

**Gloves:** Gloves will be provided to employees who require them to perform certain job functions, such as handling mail, package handling and certain trades. However, gloves may be worn by employees when cleaning and disinfecting workspaces. For the vast majority of employees, gloves should not be used for general protective use for the following reasons:

- Touching your face with contaminated hands, whether gloved or not, poses a significant risk of infection.
- Gloves often create a false sense of security for the individuals wearing them; people are more likely to touch contaminated surfaces because they feel protected from the virus.
- When wearing gloves, people are less inclined to wash their hands, even though handwashing is the number-one defense against any virus.
- Proper removal of gloves takes training. If contaminated gloves are not removed properly, employees are exposed to greater risk.



**Cleaning/Disinfection:** While office spaces will be deep cleaned (high touch area sanitizing) once a week, additional care should be taken to wipe down commonly used surfaces. Before starting work and before you leave any room in which you have been working, you must wipe down all work areas with disinfectant wipes/solution. This includes any shared-space location or equipment (e.g., copiers, printers, computers, keyboards, phones, A/V and other electrical equipment, coffee makers, desks and tables, light switches, door knobs, etc.). Disinfectant sprays, wipes and plastic gloves will be provided. Employees are highly encouraged to periodically disinfect work stations and high touch areas in their respective divisions. For computer equipment or electronics, please follow the established guidelines that were issued by the Information Technology Services Division.

## Personal Hygiene

**Handwashing:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash your hands after touching your face.



**Coughing/Sneezing Hygiene:** If you are in a private setting and do not have on your cloth face covering, remember to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Then throw used tissues in the trash.

*Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.*

## Guidance for Working In the Office

If you work in an open environment, be sure to maintain at least 6 feet of distance from co-workers. If possible, have at least one workspace separating you from another co-worker. You should wear a face mask or face covering at all times while in a shared work space/room.

Divisions should assess open work environments and meeting rooms and may institute measures to physically separate and increase distance between employees, other coworkers, and visitors, such as:

- Placing visual cues such as floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate to customers where they should stand while waiting in line.
- Placing one-way directional signage for large open work spaces with multiple through-ways to increase distance between employees moving through space.

**Meetings and Conference Rooms:** Convening in groups increases the risk of viral transmission. Where feasible, meetings should be held in whole or in part using the extensive range of available collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, telephone, etc.).

Occupancy requirements have been placed on the conference room doors, indicating maximum capacity allowed. For those whom utilize the conference rooms must adhere to health and safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus, such as sitting 6 feet away from others, wearing a mask, washing your hands often and the use of hand sanitizer.

Within divisions, you are encouraged to communicate with your colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, instant message, telephone or other available technology rather than face-to-face. You can use a range of available collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, etc.).

### Travel

**Vehicle Travel:** If employees must travel in vehicles to perform their job duties, divisions should limit the number of employees in a vehicle to the maximum extent possible. If the job duties of an employee require traveling with other persons in a vehicle, vehicle occupants are to:

- Wear face coverings
- Use hand sanitizer
- Allow for the circulation of outside air

**Non-essential Travel:** Non-essential travel should be limited until further notice. All travel must be approved by the division Vice President.

**Interactions with the Public/Visitors:** SBTCE will continue to limit face-to-face interaction with the public to the extent possible while still maintaining critical business operations. Visitors and other intermittent traffic pose additional risks. Avoid non-essential visitors and take precautions to maintain safe distances between people.

## Be Proactive

- Use phone conferences and online meeting platforms to reduce the number of visitors
- Designate one-way paths when possible
- Use tape, floor decals, or signs to identify where visitors should stand to preserve social distance
- Limit or remove chairs
- Add transparent barriers to protect both employees and visitors
- Provide hand sanitizer at entrances and in high-traffic areas
- Remove high touch items such as magazines or shared pens
- To promote health and safety in the workplace, ensure visitors have face coverings/mask or provide a disposable mask if necessary

## Guidance for COVID-19 Infection or Exposure:

Employees who have tested positive or who have been exposed to individuals who have tested positive should self-disclose to the Human Resource Services (HRS) Division. HRS Division will follow the employee exposure protocol prepared by DOA and DHEC, to ensure the safety of the workplace to the greatest extent possible.

The System Office Human Resource Services Division will be the primary point of contact for employee questions related to COVID-19. The HRS Division will ensure all appropriate privacy and confidentiality procedures and regulations are followed, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Communications regarding exposure should not be initiated or directed by front line supervisors.

Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should monitor themselves for symptoms and may be recommended for a 14-day quarantine based on the DHEC Epidemiology team's risk assessment. The area where the infected individual worked should be isolated for 24 hours and then cleaned and disinfected whenever it is feasible to do so. If it is not possible to delay access to the area, the workers who perform cleaning/disinfecting should wear appropriate PPE for protection against the cleaning materials and the virus. CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidelines will be adhered to. For additional information: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning\\_disinfection.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning_disinfection.html)

If an employee has a member of their household who tests positive for COVID-19, the employee should notify the H R S Division. If the household member tests positive for COVID-19 after the employee is back in the workplace, the employee should not return to the workplace until they have discussed with the DHEC Epidemiology team or medical provider whether they need to quarantine for 14 days. If an employee has a member of their household who tested positive and cannot stay separate from them during the quarantine period, they must quarantine for an additional 14 days beyond when the positive person meets criteria for release from isolation (therefore, minimum of 24 days).

## **Mental and Emotional Well-being**

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP), REACH EAP, is available to offer emotional support during this stressful period. Telephonic or video counseling is available, and you can access this service using most smartphones, tablets and computers with a camera. You may contact REACH EAP by calling 800-950-3434 or visiting the REACH EAP website, [www.reach-eap.com](http://www.reach-eap.com).

DHEC offers the following guidance with regard to mental health support:

### **“Are You Feeling Anxious or Stressed?”**

While we reiterate the importance of taking daily precautions to prevent spread, we want to make sure South Carolinians are also taking steps to address the feelings of stress and anxiety that arise in this type of prolonged situation. **To ensure that you protect your mental and emotional health:**

- **Take breaks** from watching, reading, or listening to news stories and social media. Hearing about COVID-19 or other stress-inducing issues repeatedly can be upsetting.
- **Take care of your body:** eat healthy, well-balanced meals; exercise regularly; get plenty of sleep; and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- **Make time to unwind** and participate in activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

In addition, please be thoughtful of how others are feeling during this time and reach out to them regularly to let them know that you and our state are here for them.

Visit [scdhec](http://scdhec) for more information regarding emotional and mental health.

**South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH)** has resources available to help cope with stress. Visit [scdmh.net](http://scdmh.net) for stress, anxiety and mental health resources.

Anyone with concerns about their health should reach out to their healthcare provider or use the telehealth services provided by several health care systems. Also, for a free online health assessment, please see our listing of **telehealth virtual care providers** in South Carolina.

- **NEW - DAODAS Resources for Those Needing Treatment and Recovery Services**
- **NEW - CDC Manage Anxiety & Stress**
- **NEW - SCDMH Resources to Help Cope with Coronavirus**
- **NEW - CDC Resources to Support People Experiencing Homelessness**

## **Crisis Lines**

**DMH Community Crisis Response and Intervention (CCRI) 24/7/365:** 1-833-364-2274

**DMH Deaf Services Crisis Hotline:** 1-800-647-2066

**National Mental Health Emergency phone number:** 988

**National Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **SC Department of Environmental and Health (DHEC):** [Homepage | SCDHEC](#)
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
- **AccelerateSC:** <https://accelerate.sc.gov/>