

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

November 1, 2021

Title: COVID19 Preparedness Plan

Department: Human Resources

Effective: June 2020 as approved by the COVID-19 Incident Manager

Updated: November 1, 2021 by Human Resources

PLAN STATEMENT

Ramsey County is committed to providing a healthy work environment for all employees and preventing the spread of COVID-19. The County maintains written COVID-19 Preparedness Plans in compliance with any MN Executive Orders or federal and Minnesota OSHA requirements or as a best practice.

The principles presented in this plan are aligned with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for [employers](#) and for [fully vaccinated people](#) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on [protecting workers](#), based on evolving understanding of the pandemic. These principles will be reassessed over time, as conditions warrant and as CDC guidelines are updated. Where a locality has imposed additional pandemic-related requirements more protective than those set forth in these model safety principles, those requirements should be followed.

APPLICABILITY

All Ramsey County employees.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Written COVID-19 Preparedness Plans were initially implemented and updated in compliance with MN Executive Orders 20-74 which expired, 6/30/21. On July 19, 2021, Minnesota OSHA adopted the federal [Emergency Temporary Standard \(ETS\)](#) to protect healthcare and healthcare support service workers from occupational exposure to COVID-19. This updated plan will apply as a minimum to all operations. Operations that provide healthcare or healthcare support services or where staff will have close contact with others, will continue to maintain separate written, operation specific plans as required by the Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) and/or other local or federal agencies or as a best practice.

All [written COVID-19 plans](#) are posted to RamseyNet. Departments must seek employee suggestions and feedback to operation specific plans and document how suggestions were integrated into the plan and how employee concerns have been addressed.

Ramsey County provides a weekly email communication to employees regarding changes to COVID-19 protocols and guidance documents. Two mandatory online COVID-19 trainings have been assigned to all staff titled, Protecting Yourself Against COVID-19 And Other Contagious Illnesses and COVID-19 Staying Safe at Work. [COVID-19 employee FAQs](#) are updated regularly on RamseyNet and employees can submit questions online. Employees can report safety concerns to Human Resources via the popular link on the home page of RamseyNet titled, "Workplace injury, safety or conduct concern." Employees who report safety concerns to Human Resources can request Human Resources keep their name confidential.

Retaliation, discrimination, and harassment based on vaccination status or for speaking out about unsafe working conditions or reporting a work-related illness or infection or exposure to COVID-19 will not be tolerated by Ramsey County.

COVID-19 EXPOSURE CONTROL PROCEDURES

Vaccination is the best way to protect oneself from contracting COVID-19 and if infected, vaccination prevents severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Ramsey County encourages all employees to get vaccinated. The County will continue monitoring vaccination and infection rates and other key public health measures week-to-week and will adjust the following exposure control procedures accordingly. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>.

Telework and Remote Work

Ramsey County is continuing to promote employees working from home wherever possible when the community COVID-19 transmission rate is Substantial or High,. Departments must obtain approval for [Service Delivery Changes](#) that increase in person interactions and communicate resulting exposure control methods to employees and provide any necessary training. When the County's COVID transmission rate is Substantial or High, meetings and trainings should be virtual. When a virtual interaction isn't possible, posted reduced occupancy limits must be followed or occupancy must be reduced to 25% of seating capacity to ensure 6 feet of distance is maintained between all participants.

Cleaning and disinfecting workspaces

As of June 14, 2021, per CDC guidance, enhanced cleaning protocols by custodial staff at owned and leased workplaces of high-traffic, high-touch building common areas were discontinued. Property Management will ensure regular cleaning of common use, high-touch surfaces in County owned buildings regularly.

Office space that is in regular use should be cleaned regularly, and in accordance with [CDC guidelines](#) by the responsible department. Wipes and other [Environmental Protection Agency-approved disinfectants](#) should be made available for use by individuals to wipe down workstations and related personal property. Products for cleaning of individual workspaces and common department work areas are the responsibility of the department and can be ordered from PH-Logistics@co.ramsey.mn.us. Request a catalog for options.

If a staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and was in the workplace, follow the cleaning protocol in the [Guidance to Departments for Potential Worksite Exposure](#).

Face coverings

Ramsey County adopted a [COVID-19 Face Covering Policy](#) in June 2020 and revised it several times in response to Public Health guidance.

As of August 4, 2021, all Ramsey County employees must wear face coverings in the following settings:

- All public or shared indoor county spaces when other individuals are also present.
- In any vehicle where there is more than one person.
- While outdoors within close contact (less than six feet) of other individuals.

Ramsey County will provide each employee with reusable cloth face coverings or employees may wear cloth face coverings of their own choosing, if their masks meet the criteria set forth in the policy.

Employees in need of accommodations should contact their supervisor or HR generalist to request an accommodation.

Wearing a face covering to minimize the spread of COVID-19 DOES:

- Help people who may not know they have the virus from transmitting it to others.
- Help slow the spread of the virus in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Help provide a safe and healthy workplace for all.

Wearing a face covering DOES NOT:

- Make it safe to leave home when sick.
- Replace the need to; be vaccinated, wash hands frequently, cover coughs and sneezes, avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth

Handwashing

Employees are instructed to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout the day, but especially at the beginning and end of their shift, prior to any mealtimes, after using common equipment or tools, and after using the restroom. Handwashing instructions should be posted at various locations in the buildings including restrooms and kitchenette areas. How to wash your hands properly video - www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdQuPGVcceg

Hand Sanitizer

Hand-sanitizer of greater than 60% alcohol is for hand hygiene when soap and water are not readily available and when hands are not visibly soiled. Property Management provides and maintains hand sanitizer dispenser stands at the entrances and other high traffic common areas in County owned buildings. Departments must determine the need for and provide hand sanitizer within work areas if access to hand washing facilities are not readily available and based on the activities conducted. Areas to consider include counter services, mail/copy centers, and other common work areas where equipment or materials are used by multiple employees. Departments can request hand sanitizer from PH-Logistics@co.ramsey.mn.us.

Health screening

Employees with symptoms of any infectious illness should stay home and contact their health care provider for testing and care. All employees will complete a daily self-screening and will not report to work if any of the following questions are answered, yes

- Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
- Have you been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days and are unvaccinated?
- Are you currently experiencing any of the COVID-19 symptoms listed below?

Fever or feeling feverish

Chills

Cough

Shortness of breath

Sore throat

Muscle aches

Loss of smell or taste

Facilities that provide 24/7 and/or healthcare or healthcare support services will have additional screening requirements for all who enter and should refer to their workplace specific plan and contact designated site specific COVID-19 safety coordinators with any questions.

Employees must notify their supervisor following standard procedures if they are unable to work due to COVID-19 symptoms or infection. Leave policies and circumstances for their usage are described in the [HR Guidance For Exposure to COVID-19 and Leave Time](#). Contact the Department Human Resources Generalist or Payroll and Transaction Assistant with questions.

Employees with recent close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 positive case outside of work should follow [CDC guidance](#) for quarantine and testing. Employees will be notified by their supervisor of any protocol to follow upon potential exposure to COVID-19 at work.

[Signage](#) must be posted at workplace entrances that anyone with COVID-19 symptoms must go home, stay away from other people, and get tested.

In person meetings or trainings

When [Ramsey County’s COVID-19 transmission rate](#) is Substantial or High, meetings and trainings should occur virtually. If a virtual meeting isn’t possible, occupancy must be reduced to either the posted reduced limit, or 25% of the room’s seating capacity to ensure six feet of distance is maintained between occupants.

Plexiglass barriers

[Per CDC guidance](#), plexiglass barriers are recommended when feasible for close interactions (less than 6 feet) for a prolonged period in healthcare settings. New requests for plexiglass barriers will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with Property Management.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The use of PPE to protect staff from exposure to COVID-19 is based on staff job duties and considers proximity and length during face-to-face interactions with residents, clients, or inmates. Cloth face coverings are not considered PPE. Surgical masks, N95 respirators, face shields, gloves, safety glasses/goggles, and gowns are examples of PPE. Most Ramsey County employees do not require PPE in the course of their daily job responsibilities.

Staff who provide healthcare related services or who have close contact with clients will utilize PPE according to site specific plans. Departments are responsible for providing staff with any necessary PPE and can request PPE from PH-Logistics@co.ramsey.mn.us. Departments must ensure all employees are trained in the use of PPE necessary for their job duties.

General guidelines for use of N95’s and face shields are below. Public Health and HR Occupational Health and Safety are available to assist in determining appropriate PPE for staff, 651-266-2929.

Masks – N95	Only for staff providing direct care for residents or inmates and for those working with infectious patients. Use requires medical evaluation and fit testing. Contact HR Occupational Health and Safety for additional information, 651-266-2929.
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Face shields (must be used with masks underneath)	By request, to provide an additional layer of protection from continuous customer interaction and disinfectant spray Face shields are primarily for eye protection and are not considered an
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	alternative to face masks. When face shields are used indoors for any reason, a cloth or surgical mask must also be underneath. A face shield and a surgical (not cloth) mask are required if an indoor interaction will be more than 15 minutes cumulatively at closer than 6 feet and is not behind plexiglass.
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Social Distancing

CDC's [Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#) indicate that those who are fully vaccinated do not need to physically distance. Those who are not fully vaccinated should continue to maintain at least 6 feet from others. Ramsey County may adjust social distancing requirements and meeting room occupancy limits based on local COVID-19 transmission rates, <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>.

When the County's COVID transmission rate is Substantial or High, meetings and trainings should be virtual. When a virtual interaction isn't possible, posted reduced occupancy limits must be followed or occupancy must be reduced to 25% of seating capacity to ensure 6 feet of distance is maintained between all participants.

Vaccination Status and Weekly Testing

Effective 11/1/21, all employees are required to certify their vaccination status. Employees who don't provide proof of vaccination are required to submit weekly COVID-19 test results per policy criteria, [Employee COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination and Testing Policy](#).

Free COVID-19 vaccine is now widely available to the public. Getting vaccinated prevents severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. All people ages 12 years and older should get vaccinated for COVID-19 to protect themselves and people around them who cannot get vaccinated. All employees are encouraged to get vaccinated. Unvaccinated employees should continue masking until they are fully vaccinated.

Ways to get a vaccine

- Contact a [trusted Community Connector](#).
- Use the Minnesota [Vaccine Locator Map](#).
- Use the [CDC VaccineFinder](#) to find pharmacy appointments.
- Contact your primary health care provider or a local pharmacy.

If you have questions or need language assistance, please call the Minnesota Department of Health COVID-19 Public Hotline at [1-833-431-2053](tel:1-833-431-2053).

Ventilation

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads between people more readily indoors than outdoors. Improving ventilation is a key engineering control that will be used as part of a layered strategy to reduce the concentration of viral particles in indoor air. In accordance with CDC guidelines, Ramsey County has ensured all owned HVAC system(s) are operating in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and design specifications and will continue:

- conducting all regularly scheduled inspections and maintenance procedures
- maximizing the amount of outside air supplied without affecting personal comfort (drafts, humidity) or the operation of exterior doors and elevators from negative building pressure
- installing air filters with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) 13 or higher where feasible.
- extending ventilation hours of operation before and after the normal occupied hours of the buildings.

EMPLOYEE PROCEDURES

Accommodation for specific circumstances

Employees can request a reasonable accommodation by contacting their supervisor or HR Business Partner/Generalist or both. [Employee Request for Job or Workplace Modification Form](#).

COVID communications

All employees, including those working remotely, are expected to stay up-to-date on employee news and announcements by reading Ramsey News (emailed every Tuesday), and regularly visiting RamseyNet (employee intranet) or the [Employee Information](#) section at ramseycounty.us/coronavirus. Other ways to stay informed include following Ramsey County on social media, subscribing to Ramsey County [e-newsletters](#) and signing up for [Workspace Alerts](#) (PDF).

COVID training

All employees have been assigned two mandatory online COVID-19 trainings via the County's Learning and Development system titled, Protecting Yourself Against COVID-19 And Other Contagious Illnesses and COVID-19 Staying Safe at Work. These trainings can be viewed an unlimited number of times.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

COVID-19 has brought many disruptions to daily routines and has created a sense of uncertainty. Employees can get one-on-one support for a variety of well-being needs through the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#). The program is available 24/7 and all inquiries are confidential. Call 888-993-7650 or <https://www.deeroakseap.com/> Username: ramsey Password: ramsey or eap@deeroaks.com.

Leave

Ramsey County has implemented leave policies that promote employees staying at home when they are sick, when household members are sick, or when required by a health care provider to isolate or quarantine. Available options include Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Paid Extraordinary Pandemic Event Leave (PEPEL), accrued vacation, sick and comp time. These leave policies and circumstances for their usage are described in the [HR Guidance For Exposure to COVID-19 and Leave Time](#). Department Human Resources Generalists are the first point of contact for employees, supervisors, and managers for general HR questions. The department Payroll and Transaction Assistant can also advise on these leave policies.

Questions or concerns

Employees should contact their supervisor or manager or designed site COVID-19 safety coordinator for questions on the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, any department specific plans and any changes in service delivery. Employees can also contact Kristen Schultz, Human Resources, Occupational Health & Safety Program Administrator with questions or concerns about workplace safety and health. Employees can report safety concerns electronically to Human Resources via the popular link on the home page of RamseyNet titled, ["Workplace injury, safety or conduct concern"](#). Employees who report safety concerns to Human Resources can request Human Resources keep their name confidential.

SUPERVISOR PROCEDURES

- When a supervisor learns an employee has been diagnosed with confirmed (or assumed) COVID-19 refer to [Guidance to Departments for Potential COVID-19 Worksite Exposure](#).
- Obtain approval for [Service Delivery Changes](#) that increase in person resident interactions and

communicate resulting exposure control methods to employees.

- Seek employee suggestions and feedback to site specific plans and document how suggestions were integrated into the plan and how employee concerns have been addressed.

DEFINITIONS

Close contact

Being within 6 feet of someone for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period indoors and not behind plexiglass.

Fully vaccinated

In general, people are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine

[Per CDC guidance](#), those that don't meet these requirements, regardless of age, are NOT fully vaccinated and should keep taking all precautions until fully vaccinated.

Healthcare services

Services that are provided to individuals by professional healthcare practitioners (e.g., doctors, nurses, emergency medical personnel, oral health professionals) for the purpose of promoting, maintaining, monitoring, or restoring health; it includes hospitals, long-term care units, ambulatory care, home health and hospice care, emergency medical response, patient transports, and autopsies.

Healthcare support services

Services that facilitate the provision of healthcare services; it includes "patient intake/admission, patient food services, equipment and facility maintenance, housekeeping services, healthcare laundry services, medical waste handling services, and medical equipment cleaning/reprocessing services."

RESPONSIBILITIES

- All employees are responsible for complying with this plan.
- Department Directors must ensure that all employees are familiar with this plan and any department/site specific plans.
- Departments must seek employee suggestions and feedback to site specific plans and document how suggestions were integrated into the plan and how employee concerns have been addressed.

AUTHORITY

This plan ensures compliance with the federal [Healthcare Emergency Temporary Standard \(ETS\)](#) adopted by [MN OSHA on 7/19/21](#).

The initial COVID-19 Preparedness Plan was approved by the County Incident Manager (CIM) and ensured compliance with [MN Executive Orders 20-74](#).

Human Resources will coordinate updates to this plan as required by Federal or local regulations.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

General

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus
- MN Vaccine Connector: <https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/connector/>
- Healthcare ETS FAQ's: <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/ets/faqs>
- Interim Guidance for Correctional Settings: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/jailsread.pdf>
- Federal OSHA: www.osha.gov
- MN OSHA: <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/workplace-safety-and-health/mnosha-compliance-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>

Ramsey County

- [Face Covering Policy](#)
- [Employee COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination and Testing Policy](#)
- [Health screening prior to entry –](#)
- [Ramsey County Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)

CONTACTS/SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

Public Health

- Public Health Incident Command Team Safety Officer: [Jennifer Schreifels \(651-266-1209\)](#)
- [Public Health COVID-19 Logistics](#)

Human Resources

- ContactHR@ramseycounty.us or HR Reception, 651-266-2700
- Safety and Occupational Health: [651-266-2929](#)
- Disability and Leave of Absence Administration: 651-266-2729
- HR Business Partner/Generalists: 651-266-2700 or RamseyNet page, [Human Resources Business Partner \(Generalists\)](#)
- Labor Relations Manager: [651-266-2728](#)

Property Management

- Property Management Manager: [651-266-2262](#)

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Brief description of change	<u>Approval</u>
November 1, 2021	Updated to reflect compliance with the Employee COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination and Testing Policy.	Sandi Blaeser, Deputy Director, Human Resources
August 31, 2021	Updated to reflect change in face covering, social distancing and occupancy limits based on transmission rate, High	Sandi Blaeser, Deputy Director, Human Resources
August 19, 2021	Updated to reflect expiration of MN COVID-19 Executive Orders and compliance with remaining federal and MN OSHA requirements and current MDH and CDC guidance.	Sandi Blaeser, Deputy Director, Human Resources
June 2020	Plan implantation per MN Executive Order 20-74	COVID-19 Incident Manager