



Safe Start Resources Handbook for DNR Employees

October 2020

As an agency, we are committed to serve and support Washington State and each other through these difficult times. This dedication to service calls for us to look at different ways to support those with child care, adult care, remote learning needs and many other family obligations amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing as much flexibility to our employees as possible is key to supporting them in these challenging times.

COVID-19 continues to affect our state, staff, and families. The continued spread of the virus and the pace of vaccine development tells us we still have a long way to go with this pandemic. We will continue to work together as we navigate new challenges that arise. We will continue to support each other and Washingtonians by maintaining DNR's mission and following DNR's Core Competencies: Personal Accountability, Values Others, Compassionate Communication, Inspire Others, and Commitment to excellence.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katy Taylor".

Kathryn W. Taylor
Chief Operations Officer

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Introduction

DNR employees recently participated in a survey to identify specific needs when “returning to normal” operations. DNR received over 1,000 responses to help identify work needs. These responses helped the Safe Start work group create a 4 tiered approach to returning to the workplace. Further, many responses indicated the need for a resource manual to help navigate balancing work and home responsibilities in the midst of COVID-19.

The survey revealed that employees were experiencing fear, worry, and anxiety about the upcoming school year, parents, partners, family and friends, and being able to balance work responsibilities with family and educational responsibilities. Many DNR employees who are parents or caregivers are uncertain about what options are available to support them at this time.

This resource manual provides support and reflects DNR’S commitment to our employees in achieving our mission of: Manage, sustain, and protect the health and productivity of Washington’s lands and waters to meet the needs of present and future generations.

Workplace Flexibility and Balance

Many of the options and offerings listed within this resource manual are new in DNR – and across other state agencies. We know, now more than ever, that we must take necessary steps and measured risks to support employees in balancing work, family and caregiving responsibilities, and their own mental and physical health while meeting the needs of our customers.

We need to work together as an agency to promote workplace flexibility as we respond to changing circumstances and expectations to ensure parents and caregivers can continue working while finding a work-life balance.

Listed below are some options we encourage supervisors and staff to consider and discuss as options that promote flexibility and balance. The “Steps to a Safe Start” document Appendix A, has further suggestions on workplace arrangements supervisors can utilize to ensure staff safety and flexibility when returning to office and work locations.

Telework

DNR will have an updated telework policy. The overall arching theme for telework within DNR is:

“DNR supports and encourages appropriate use of telework. While DNR assigns employee duty stations, the agency recognizes that flexibility in work locations can help achieve organizational health goals like recruiting and retaining employees, enabling increased productivity and performance, fostering an engaging work environment, supporting health and wellness, and reducing carbon emissions.”

Further, within the Safe Start Tier guide, the following statement is in each of the tiers: “Staff are requested to telework as much as their job and continuity of operations permits”. In the final (4th) tier, the Safe Start Tier guide references DNR’s telework policy for guidance.

Supervisors may discuss:

- Expectations for deadlines and workloads.
- Other requests for information or potential work.
- Discussions can occur in conjunction with flexibility when employees need to perform specific work throughout the day. It is likely parents and caregivers will need to support online learning or need to care for others that could affect current work routines.

Items to consider:

- Availability of and access to needed equipment and systems.
- Staff flexibility or lack of flexibility of their particular job duties.
- If employees’ work cannot be conducted in a flexible manner, they may still take protected leave to care for a child or an adult if caregiving prevents them from working.

Adjusting Daily Work Hours

For positions that allow for it, supervisor may have the ability to offer expanded work hours or adjust shifts for employees who are taking care of children and/or other family members participating in remote learning or specific caregiving functions.

Some examples include:

- Allow employees to work split shifts to have core learning hours available to support their child/children with remote learning assistance. An example of this is to allow an employee to work from 6a.m. to 9a.m. and then work from 3p.m. to 8p.m.
- Allow employees to work an earlier or later shift. An example of this is to allow an employee to start work at 11a.m. and end work at 8p.m. so they can assist their child/children with school in the morning. For represented employees, specific provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreements regarding shift premium should be considered before approving such requests. This includes any COVID-19 specific Memorandums of Understanding currently in effect.

Leave Laws

Employees have the ability to use several types of protected leave laws, rules and regulations. These different laws can be used in conjunction with one another or separately depending on the reason for the leave. The Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) has created a chart on how different leave types may apply for different situations. Contact Human Resources for specific questions and guidance.

OFM Leave Guidance Chart

https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/shr/COVID19/SHR_leave_guidance_COVID19.pdf?k7himl

Employee/Supervisor Telework and Work/Life Balance Resources

Located at www.DNR.wa.gov/employeeresources, several resources are available:

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

<https://des.wa.gov/services/hr-finance/washington-state-employee-assistance-program-eap>

EAP Resources for Parents and Caregivers

<https://des.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/More%20DOP%20Services/EAP/Brochures%20and%20Posters/EAP%201%20Page%20Info%20Sheet.pdf?=074f2>

Work from home options for employees and supervisors

https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/em_covid2020_teleworkingoptions.docx?k7himl

Telework best practices options and links:

https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/em_covid2020_teleworkbestpractices_updated_august.pdf?k7himl

Linkedin Learning access and log-in information:

https://www.dnr.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/em_covid2020_llaccessandlogin.pdf?pbixd&k7himl

Setting up your home office:

https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/em_covid2020_ergonomicteleworkers.pdf?k7himl

Other Resources

Disclaimer: The inclusion of these resources is not intended to reflect their particular importance, nor intended to endorse any views expressed or products or services offered.

Child Care Resources

ChildCare Aware (open in chrome): A non-profit dedicated to ensuring every child in Washington has access to high-quality child care and early learning programs.

ECEAP & Head Start/Early Head Start: Provides early child care assistance for pre-kindergarten children through the state and federal programs.

Family, Friends, and Neighbor Providers: FFN providers include grandparents, aunts and uncles, elders, older siblings, friends, neighbors, and others who help families by providing child care.

Meals Resources

Check with your local school district for information.

Meals for Kids Site Finder site for children who rely on free and reduced-price school meals.
Find free meals for kids under 18 by texting "FOOD" to 877-877

Wi-Fi / Internet Access Resources

Drive-In Wi-Fi Hotspots – Provide free temporary, emergency internet access for Washingtonians who do not have broadband service to their homes. Access is available to all residents with specific emphasis on remote learning for students. Additionally, this service can be used for job searches, telehealth, telework, unemployment filing and census participation.

Internet Resources:

Home Internet Options

- Comcast (xfinity)
- Charter Spectrum
- AT&T Access
- Lifeline