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STATE BEGINS PREPARATIONS TO GRADUALLY RETURN EMPLOYEES TO THE WORKPLACE

Montpelier, Vt.—The Agency of Administration today announced that State employees who can telework should expect to do so at least through May 31, 2021. This extends the expectation set in October that telework would extend to March 31, 2021.

"In October 2020, Vermont was experiencing an increase in COVID-19 infections and outbreaks traced back to social gatherings during a season when we were collectively moving indoors and increasing the risk of spread of the virus. School re-openings were, and continue to be, successful and it remains true that part of that success has been the flexibility provided to schools and families to shift to in-person and/or remote learning schedules as needed very quickly," said Secretary of Administration Susanne Young. "Maintaining a telework status allowed us to maintain heightened efforts to suppress the virus while we awaited the roll out of a vaccine."

Since the availability of approved vaccines, vaccinations to date have rolled out very quickly in Vermont. So long as vaccine supply is available, the Health Department expects to be substantially complete with the high-risk population (those 65+ and with certain underlying health conditions) in mid-April. By then, we may have as many as 1-in-3 Vermonters vaccinated and details of the next steps in the vaccination plan will be available.

Due to improving conditions, beginning April 1, State agency and department leadership will be authorized to approve requests from employees to return to the worksite based on employee preference if there is capacity to do so in accordance with the State's Work Safe Guidance. Leadership currently may authorize employees for onsite work if 25 percent of their job duties require a return to an office setting, home internet speeds or other connectivity issues are insufficient to support full execution of job duties, and home office ergonomics or other conditions in the home environment are unsuitable for full-time remote work.

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“The Administration is considering what steps it can take to maintain flexibility in remote work and work schedules in a post-pandemic environment,” continued Young. “The results of an employee survey conducted in December that was released today will help inform the decision. A majority of employees who responded to the survey expressed interest in continuing to work remotely on either a full or part-time basis.”

“I want to thank our state employees who have remained nimble and productive, while ensuring critical services and programs are delivered to Vermonters during the pandemic,” said Governor Phil Scott. “We look forward to welcoming employees back to the worksite in the months ahead, while understanding that continued flexibility in schedules and locations is likely going to continue beyond the pandemic.”

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