Wolf Administration Provides Guidance to Commonwealth Employees on Travel and Large Gatherings

March 11, 2020

Memo, Press Release, Public Health

In consultation with the Department of Health, Governor Tom Wolf today provided direction on travel and large gatherings for commonwealth agencies and employees under the governor's jurisdiction in response to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Pennsylvania.

"We are taking this action in the best interest of all commonwealth employees as we continue to respond swiftly and appropriately to the outbreak of COVID-19," said Gov. Wolf. "Many state employees are working on the front lines with federal and local partners to coordinate efforts. I thank you for your commitment."

The new directives for commonwealth employees take effect immediately and are consistent with the governor's emergency disaster declaration and based on the Pennsylvania Department of Health and CDC's recommendations.

Travel:

- No international travel for official commonwealth business.
- No out-of-state travel for official commonwealth business unless determined to be mission critical by agency heads.

Large meetings, conferences, trainings, and community events:

- Postpone hosting or participating in large meetings, conferences, trainings, or community events unless approved by the Governor's Office.
- If a large gathering must be held in person, approval by the Governor's Office is required.
- Consider virtual large gatherings as an alternative.

The governor also provided employee guidance for those missing work due to COVID-19.

Temporary/Emergency Telework:

- Employees who are in COVID-19 quarantine, but otherwise healthy and able to work, may be authorized for telework by their supervisors in cooperation with human resources.
- Remote work arrangements under this policy are temporary and specific to COVID-19 self-quarantine.

Expansion of Leave and Paid Status for Impacted Employees:

- If a quarantined employee is unable to telework, the employee can seek approval to stay home from work with no loss in pay for up to 10 workdays (during the 14-day quarantine period).
- This release from work with pay would be a very rare outcome, and we will explore all options short of this step so we can provide vital services to the commonwealth citizens.

The commonwealth will continue to evaluate the need to modify policies as the situation continues to develop. In the interim, all existing policies are currently in force.

Governor Tom Wolf signed an emergency disaster declaration on March 6 that directs all commonwealth departments and agencies to use all available resources and personnel as is deemed necessary to respond to the emergency situation.

About COVID-19
Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying. Individuals most at risk for severe symptoms include elderly and those with pre-existing conditions.

Pennsylvanians are reminded to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently, such as countertops, light switches, cell phones and other frequently touched areas.
- Contain if you are sick, you should stay home until you are feeling better.

For up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Pennsylvania, visit the PA Department of Health’s dedicated coronavirus webpage that is updated daily.