

# Hardin County, Iowa Communicable Disease Policy

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

It is the policy of Hardin County to provide a safe and healthy work environment by establishing procedures and guidelines to help prevent and/or limit the transmission of communicable diseases in the workplace. During a pandemic and/or other communicable disease emergency, Hardin County may implement plans to adjust their operations if a reduced workforce is experienced to ensure resources are available to provide critical processes.

## **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all Hardin County employees, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary. All Supervisors and Department Heads shall apply this policy consistently.

Hardin County's decisions involving persons who have communicable diseases shall be based on current and well-informed medical judgments concerning the disease, the risks of transmitting the illness to others, the symptoms and special circumstances of each individual who has a communicable disease, and a careful weighing of the identified risks and the available alternative for responding to an employee with a communicable disease.

Communicable diseases include, but are not limited to, measles, influenza, viral hepatitis-A (infectious hepatitis), viral hepatitis-B (serum hepatitis), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV infection), AIDS, AIDS-Related Complex (ARC), leprosy, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), including the SARS-CoV-2 (coronavirus) and tuberculosis. Hardin County may choose to broaden this definition within its best interest and in accordance with information received through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Hardin County will not discriminate against any job applicant or employee based on the individual having a communicable disease. Applicants and employees shall not be denied access to the workplace solely on the grounds that they have a communicable disease. Hardin County reserves the right to exclude a person with a communicable disease from the workplace facilities, programs and functions if the organization finds that, based on a medical

determination, such restriction is necessary for the welfare of the person who has the communicable disease and/or the welfare of others within the workplace.

Hardin County will comply with all applicable statutes and regulations that protect the privacy of persons who have a communicable disease. Every effort will be made to ensure procedurally sufficient safeguards to maintain the personal confidence about persons who have communicable diseases.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **A. Preventive Measures**

During a pandemic and/or other communicable disease emergency, as declared in accordance with established guidelines set by the World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), or State and local public health officials the following preventive measures identified below may be initiated:

1. Providing appropriate information and training to employees
2. Arranging for onsite voluntary vaccinations by healthcare providers
3. Implementing social distancing practices including:
  - a. Reducing face-to-face exposure by using conference calls
  - b. Minimizing or eliminating travel to affected areas (this is not applicable to emergency responders)
  - c. Cancelling meetings, workshops, training sessions and scheduled events (this is not applicable to emergency responders)
  - d. Allowing employees to work from home to reduce exposure in the workplace
4. Ensuring frequently touched items (e.g., door knobs, hand rails, etc.) are cleaned and disinfected regularly
5. Reinforcing frequent handwashing and providing hand sanitizers to employees
6. Providing employees with tissues and disinfectant wipes to allow employees to disinfect copiers, keyboards, telephone receivers, etc. in their work areas
7. Encouraging employees to stay home and/or sending employees home who have symptoms consistent with the symptoms identified by the CDC, State and local health authorities for the pandemic or communicable disease of concern
8. Requiring employees who travel to an affected area to remain at home until the incubation period of the pandemic and/or communicable disease of concern has passed, if indicated (this is not

applicable to emergency responders who respond to incidents within our service area)

9. Requiring all visitors and staff to take temperatures with existing temperature screening kiosks upon entry to any Hardin County Facility.

#### **B. Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)**

Each department is required to prepare a COOP that may be implemented to adjust their operations if a reduced workforce is experienced to ensure resources are available to provide critical processes. The County's Public Information Officer or designee may recommend activation of a department's COOP.

#### **C. Employees Who Appear Ill While at Work**

When an employee is present in the workplace and exhibits signs of a contagious illness, they must be directed to go home.

An employee's Supervisor and Department Head, or designee must observe one or more of the following symptoms of a contagious disease.

1. Persistent coughing or sneezing
2. Flushed skin
3. Sweating with exertion
4. Fever or chills
5. Persistent eye and/or nasal discharge
6. Extreme fatigue or lethargy
7. Blistering or oozing skin lesions, and/or
8. Other symptoms as determined by public health officials such as the CDC.

#### **D. Department's Response**

During a declaration of a pandemic by the WHO and/or the CDC, employees exhibiting signs of a contagious disease may be directed as follows:

1. The employee will be referred to their personal physician or local urgent care facility for evaluation and diagnostic testing, if indicated. If the employee's physician diagnoses a contagious illness consistent with transmission in the workplace, the employee shall notify their immediate supervisor.
2. Due to the high prevalence of disease during a pandemic, there is high probability that one would become ill because of an exposure occurring

outside the workplace. Therefore, it will be incumbent upon the employee to notify their supervisor of exposure to the pandemic disease.

#### **E. Employees Returning to Work**

An employee who has been absent from work due to a contagious illness shall be allowed to return to work when she/he has had no fever for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medication and is no longer displaying other symptoms of contagious illness.

#### **F. Communication**

In order to effectively inform employees about a pandemic and/or other significant communicable disease outbreak, the County's Public Information Officer will be responsible, in conjunction with the County Public Health, for developing a Crisis Communication plan for pandemics and/or other communicable diseases.

#### **G. Appropriate Leave**

Employees may be permitted to use their accrued sick leave, or other appropriate leave, if they have symptoms consistent with the pandemic and/or communicable disease of concern or to care for a child with symptoms or confirmed case of a communicable disease. If the leave is qualifies as covered by the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), paid leave may be used in accordance with the County's FMLA policy. Employees may use accrued vacation time to be paid if they elect to stay home to help prevent spreading the disease to others in the workplace. Time used will be consistent with existing policies and procedures and state and/or federal laws.

Other examples of leave that may be enforced as a result of this policy include:

1. Quarantined by a Public Health Official: If an employee is quarantined, the employee may use vacation leave to be paid if they are asymptomatic until the quarantine period ends. If the employee exhibits symptoms or becomes ill with the communicable disease, they may use sick leave to be paid.
2. Hardin County offices close or only critical business processes are allowed to continue: If employees are asked to stay home due to the closure of Hardin County buildings or offices or they are not assigned to a critical business process, employees may use accrued compensatory

leave, vacation leave, or unpaid authorized leave if the employee does not have sufficient accrued paid leave available.

**H. Review of the Policy Provisions**

The Hardin County Board of Supervisors or designee, in conjunction with local public health officials, will review, amend, extend, or cancel the provisions of this policy as appropriate.