

Phases of Returning to Workplaces

June 12, 2020

Agency leaders have been developing a plan in recent weeks for staff to begin to return to workplaces. Returning to work in phases allows our organization to maintain productivity while minimizing the spread of COVID-19 by keeping employees farther apart. **In the first two phases of our three-phase approach, most staff will continue to remote work and then return to workplaces in phases.** Here's a closer look at how we're planning a phased approach.

Note: Because COVID-19 is an evolving pandemic, our decisions may change as we continue to monitor public health guidance and analyze the data in our area.

Phase 1 (already underway)

We are currently in Phase 1 of Returning to Workplaces. We have created [protocols](#) for our staff to work from an agency workplace when they can't physically do their work from a remote setting. Minimal numbers of staff have been approved by supervisors to do this work for the Agency, and we appreciate their commitment to keeping things running smoothly. Those employee groups include:

- Administration
- Business Office
- Human Resources
- Internal Technology: Support/repairs
- Operations Staff: Custodial, maintenance, van delivery and packing for staff members who are leaving/transitioning to a new assignment and/or preparing for office deep cleaning
- Regional Administrative Assistants: Special Education paperwork/support
- Regional Directors and Professional Learning Providers: District Return-to-Learn planning
- Special Education Extended School Year Service Providers (Limited based on IEP team decisions and supervisor awareness.)
- *Note: Our primary service delivery mode continues to be virtual.*

Phase 2 (Begin July 6)

Agency workplaces will be open to additional designated staff but not to the public. Our building capacity has been adjusted to quantify the number of staff who can work in our workspaces and our [protocols](#) have been adjusted for working in an agency workspace to mitigate risk and create

an environment that is as safe as possible in light of what we know about the spread of the virus. Staff is expected to study these [protocols](#) prior to their return to agency workspaces, as following these protocols is an expectation for all. If you have any questions or concerns, contact [Nia Chiaramonte](#), Director of Human Resources.

While many staff will continue to work remotely, supervisors may identify additional work that can only be done in an agency workspace. This allows eligible staff who are lower exposure risk (office-based) to return to a physical office location. The Occupational Health & Safety Administration defines these workers as having minimal occupational contact with the public and other co-workers. Office-based staff is considered a lower exposure risk given that they have limited public contact and social distancing is easier to accommodate. Those employee groups who are identified as eligible to return to agency offices during Phase 2 include:

- Administrative Assistants/Executive Assistants
- Business Office
- Communications
- Creative Services
- Human Resources
- Information Systems
- Internal Technology
- Library Services

Phase 3 (will not begin before Aug. 1)

For those staff members who work primarily in schools, reaching a conclusion on specific protocols will be heavily dependent on the Return-to-Learn plans that are developed by each district and due to the Department of Education by July 1. Agency staff input will influence our plans to ensure that Heartland AEA employees are put in the safest position possible while delivering service. There will be much more to come on this topic as more details emerge.

Questions?

More specific details and direction will likely be coming from your supervisor. Send any questions, concerns or ideas to the [Communications Department](#) and the Agency's COVID-19 Task Force will review them.