

COVID-19 Guidance for Nebraska Counties

- Project calm. As a leader in county government, your actions will influence your constituents.
- Until the emergency has passed, limit the non-essentials:
 - Non-essential agenda items;
 - Non-essential travel;
 - Non-essential meetings, particularly in groups of 10 or more.
- Consider the use of online, video, and telephone service to your constituents.
- Consult with your emergency manager and public health director prior to publishing notice of an upcoming meeting.
- Take advantage of resources available to you and your constituents. NACO will provide and update a list of those it finds helpful on its webpage. If you find something we don't list, please forward it to us!
- Take care with your personal hygiene; sanitize your personal workspace; sanitize the common areas of the courthouse.

Daily Office Operations

- Officials, managers, and supervisors must encourage employees to remain home when they are sick.
- Take steps to maximize telework options for as many employees as possible. Identify tasks that employees can do remotely or provide alternative options for telecommuting if circumstances later necessitate an expansion of telework.
- Ensure each of your worksites are taking steps to maintain high environmental hygiene standards by cleaning surfaces with EPA-approved environmental disinfectants. In particular, routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops and doorknobs. If feasible, provide disposable disinfectant wipes so that commonly used services can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- Remember that each elected official can determine whether his or her office will be open and the county board can determine whether the courthouse will be open. The governor has broad authority to suspend the regulations of state agencies if strict compliance would hinder necessary actions to deal with a disaster or emergency ([§ 81-829.40](#)). Courts can only be closed upon the order of the Chief Justice of the Nebraska Supreme Court ([§ 25-2221](#)).
- Should an incident or occurrence make staffing and operations impossible, the county board may declare an emergency under [§ 81-829.50](#).

- For offices with regular public interface, post signs and resources to address non-pharmaceutical interventions and consider further efforts to mitigate exposure, especially for individuals showing symptoms. Click [here](#) to view resources.

Conferences, Meetings and Business-Related Gatherings

- Where possible, consider canceling or adjusting non-essential in-person employee meetings and gatherings of 10 or more individuals for the time being. Work with staff to develop alternatives for conducting these meetings to minimize risk, including the use of remote meeting technology. Use good judgment when determining which meetings are essential.
- The Open Meetings Act (§§ [84-1407](#) to [84-1414](#)) allows county boards to hold emergency meetings via electronic or telecommunication equipment without reasonable advance publicized notice. An emergency has been defined as an unforeseen occurrence or condition or one that requires an immediate resolution that was impossible to anticipate.
- Governor Pete Ricketts has issued [Executive Order No. 20-03](#) to allow all governing bodies to meet by videoconference, telephone conferencing, or other electronic communication so long as there is access to members of the public and the media. The order does not waive requirements for agendas and advance publicized notice. The order terminates on May 31, 2020.

Business Travel

- All business travel to impacted areas on the CDC list Warning Levels 3 and 2 should be cancelled- click [here](#) to see CDC travel details.
- Limit all non-essential business travel. Essential travel should be determined by the county board or supervising official. Factors to consider include:
 - Is the travel related to the county's continuity of operations?
 - What is the destination and is it currently impacted?
 - What is the mode of travel and does it involve movement through impacted areas described in the CDC link above?
 - What is the mission, and does it take the person into a higher exposure situation (i.e. group larger than 10 people)?
 - Are there alternative methods that can still accomplish the mission (i.e. video conference, remote access)?

Office or Courthouse Closure

- County boards considering closing the courthouse should consult with other county officials, courts, and state agencies housed within the courthouse when possible.

- County officials considering closing their offices should coordinate with the county board and appropriate state agencies when possible to address deadlines, essential functions, and remote work.
- When determining whether to close an office consider several factors, including:
 - Impact to the mission and public
 - Risk to employees and public of remaining open
 - Alternatives to continue effective operations (remote location, telecommuting)
 - Span of impacted area or potential for further contamination
 - Impact of closure on employees and public
 - Ability to conduct a partial closure of office

Navigating Questions on Possible Exposure

The steps a county should take when an employee reports a possible exposure to COVID-19 will depend upon the specific circumstances. Err on the side of caution. When preparing for navigating issues related to exposure, follow the steps below:

First, get familiar with existing CDC risk assessment resources. These resources should be reviewed immediately. The first link provides details on the factors and customary CDC interventions a county should take- click [here](#) to review the document. The second link is decision matrix to help assess the appropriate employer interventions- click [here](#) to review the decision matrix. Information in these documents will assist with providing some detail on the factors and possible employer interventions.

Second, consult with your local public health department to assess next steps. Access to contact information can be found [here](#).

Third, based on the advice of the local public health department, take appropriate action, if any. If the employee is directed to stay away from the workplace, take steps to determine if remote work is an option while the employee is away from the office and able to work. If the employee is unable to work remotely, explore leave options for the employee. Counties should administer leave in accordance with the employee leave provisions of their personnel manual, civil service provisions, or applicable collective bargaining agreement or rules.

Note: If working with an employee confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, officials should inform employees of their possible exposure in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or HIPAA.

Quarantine

- Prior to taking any specific action regarding office closure, work restrictions, or quarantine, consult with your local public health department and county attorney's office.
- The Department of Health and Human Services has general power over quarantines and quarantine regulations. § [81-601](#).
- Additional information on Nebraska-specific corona virus issues can be found at: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>