



CITY OF HOUSTON

Administrative Procedure

Subject: **Pandemic Preparedness Plan for City of Houston Workforce**

A.P. No.

2-8

Effective Date: Upon Approval

1. AUTHORITY

- 1.1. Article VI, Section 7a, of the Houston City Charter – administrative authority of the Mayor.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide the framework and reference point for development of continuity of business in each city department in the event of a Pandemic in Houston, to establish policies and procedures designed to minimize disruption to city services, to minimize illness and death among the work force, to establish the authority to alter attendance requirements and compensation of affected City employees, and establish the authority to alter existing or mandated business practices.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP): A City plan which establishes policy and guidance to ensure the execution of Essential City Services within departments in the event that an emergency threatens or incapacitates operations and the relocation of selected personnel and functions is required. Specifically, the plan is designed to:
 - 3.1.a Ensure City departments are prepared to respond to emergencies, recover from them, and mitigate against their impacts.
 - 3.1.b. Ensure City departments are prepared to provide Essential City Services in an environment that is threatened, diminished, or incapacitated.
- 3.2. Essential City Services: The prioritized services that are performed in the event that not all services can be performed, as determined by the Mayor and Department Directors.
- 3.3. Local Health Authority: A physician appointed under the provisions of the State of Texas Health & Safety Code § 121.021 to administer state and local laws relating to public health within the appointing body's jurisdiction.
- 3.4. Office of Emergency Management (OEM): The office responsible for coordinating emergency planning to ensure consistency across departments, identify gaps, develop contingencies, and integrate community planning efforts.

Approved:

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3.5. Pandemic: An epidemic over a wide geographic area and affecting a large portion of the population. Epidemic is the occurrence of more cases of a disease than would be expected in a community region during a given period of time.

3.6. Plan: Each city department's Pandemic influenza preparedness plan.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1. It is the policy of the City of Houston, during a Pandemic, to remain open for business and to deliver city services to the extent possible, while at the same time taking all reasonable measures to minimize exposure of the public and city employees to contagious diseases.

5. POLICY AMPLIFICATION

5.1. A pandemic may occur in waves of 4 to 8 weeks over 12 to 18 months. It is likely that absence rates could reach 20-30% or higher during a pandemic. Employees may become ill/unavailable in intervals, but may be able to return to work before the pandemic has run its course. Departments shall develop policies with contingencies for continuing Essential City Services. Contagious employees will not be permitted to report to city work sites.

5.2. In the event of a Pandemic, the city intends to ensure continuity of operations and minimize disruption of Essential City Services, redeploy staff as necessary, prevent unnecessary spread of illness, redesign services to accommodate public health requirements (such as social distancing) and clearly communicate in advance that essential functions may change without notice.

5.3. Each department shall develop department specific plans / procedures / guidelines consistent with this policy in its Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP) or in some other appropriate format. Departments are encouraged to use the planning "tool kit" developed by the OEM for this purpose.

6. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

6.1. This policy is applicable to all City Departments and employees.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1. Mayor: It is the responsibility and prerogative of the Mayor:

7.1.1. To activate this policy.

7.1.2. To determine which city services will be continued or suspended during a Pandemic event.

7.1.3. To direct or advise city employees to report to their regular or alternate work locations or stay home as a result of emergency conditions, and how they will be compensated.

- 7.1.4. To declare special compensation conditions as necessary to provide for emergency or Essential City Services, as needed.
 - 7.1.5. To establish a return-to work policy after an employee's absence due to the illness.
 - 7.1.6. To develop and coordinate communication to employees and the public.
 - 7.1.7. To modify policy concerning out of town and out of country travel.
- 7.2. Local Health Authority - It is the responsibility of the Local Health Authority:
- 7.2.1. To advise the Mayor on the development of dangerous conditions.
 - 7.2.2. To develop and disseminate Public Health advisories to promote workplace practices to reduce transmission of illness.
 - 7.2.3. To prepare guidelines for recognizing symptoms consistent with highly contagious illnesses.
- 7.3. Department Directors - It is the responsibility of each department director to prepare special Plans to respond to changing business conditions during a Pandemic. Departments are encouraged to use the planning "tool kit" developed by the Office of Emergency Management for this purpose. At a minimum, Plans shall address the following:
- 7.3.1. Prioritize city services to be delivered / suspended in that department.
 - 7.3.2. Communicate health / safety guidelines to employees regarding hygiene, social distancing, etc., and modify city work practices to accommodate such guidelines.
 - 7.3.3. Identify staff and coordinators in the department who will execute the Pandemic Plan.
 - 7.3.4. Identify, train, and prepare an auxiliary workforce, develop contingencies, cross-train in advance, and identify retirees who may be trained to assist.
 - 7.3.5. Identify any increase / decrease in demand for department services and supplies and develop contingency plans for possible outages from suppliers or vendors.
 - 7.3.6. Review COOP / Business Continuity Plans (BCP) of critical vendors and develop contingency plans for delivery shortfalls that could impact essential services.
 - 7.3.7. Identify situations where shortages in private citizen services will increase demand on city services.
 - 7.3.8. Project and monitor budget impact for decreased revenue, increased expenses, and previously unanticipated demand.



- 7.3.9. Develop, implement, and monitor department communications plans for employees and the public, synchronizing with appropriate authorities.
- 7.3.10. Submit the department's Plan to the OEM for registration.
- 7.3.11. Restructure certain jobs to accommodate appropriate telecommuting options, where employees may be assigned to work from home, or on off-cycle schedules.
- 7.3.12. Determine whether an employee meets the criteria (according to 7.2.3) to stay home from the work place or to be sent home from workplace and placed on sick leave.
- 7.3.13. Identify staff members in advance who have medical licensure.
- 7.3.14. Provide appropriate supplies to employees to minimize exposure and promote wellness.
- 7.3.15. Develop a process to track and report absences daily instead of weekly.

- 7.4. Director of Finance - It is the responsibility of the Director:
 - 7.4.1. To ensure that proper support for disaster-related purchasing and accounting procedures required during the disaster are provided.

- 7.5. Director of Administration and Regulatory Affairs – it is the responsibility of the Director:
 - 7.5.1. To determine which payroll codes are to be used for absences during the Pandemic.
 - 7.5.2. Develop a process to track and report absences daily instead of weekly.

- 7.6. Director of Information Technology – It is the responsibility of the Director:
 - 7.6.1. To provide appropriate IT resources at city work sites to accommodate department's contingency plans.
 - 7.6.2. To provide appropriate IT resources accessible from temporary external sites to accommodate department's telecommuting contingencies (i.e. remote access, laptop computer, etc.)

- 7.7. Director of Human Resources- It is the responsibility of the Director:
 - 7.7.1. To adapt personnel policies, procedures and practices to accommodate departments' contingency Plans for providing Essential City Services.
 - 7.7.2. To coordinate the dissemination of appropriate information and coordinate internal media.

- 7.8. Office of Emergency Management - It is the responsibility of the OEM:
 - 7.8.1. To register all Plans, certifying that they meet specification of 7.3 above.
 - 7.8.2. To ensure activation of COOP, as necessary.
 - 7.8.3. To coordinate city departmental COOP plan enhancements for a pandemic.

- 7.8.4. To implement, maintain, and issue situational / status reports on a regular basis to the Mayor and Department Directors.
- 7.8.5. To facilitate an overall report on city-wide staffing status and requests for staffing assistance.

7.9. City Employees - It is the responsibility of city employees:

- 7.9.1. To follow health and safety guidelines issued by the Local Health Authority.
- 7.9.2. To report to work in compliance with this policy, and be prepared to be reassigned to other duties/locations.
- 7.9.3. To monitor public and departmental communications about the emergency and return-to-work instructions.
- 7.9.4. To identify and document any current medical licensing, upon request.

8. PROCEDURES

8.1. Upon instruction by the Mayor:

- 8.1.1. Department directors shall activate their Plans.
- 8.1.2. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be activated.

9. COMPLIANCE

9.1. Departments and employees shall comply with the provisions of this policy. An employee not in compliance with this policy or his/her departmental policies and practices shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action as determined by the department director. The employee's judgment in applying this policy is also subject to department review and any appropriate action. Any action taken shall be consistent in that department for all similarly situated employees.

10. ADAPTATION

10.1. In the absence of any other policy, this policy may be adapted to other emergencies.

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