

# National Indian Health Board



March 27, 2020

*Revised March 27, 2020 - SAB*

## **NIHB Policy Regarding Staff and Internal Operations in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

This policy is effective Monday, March 30, 2020 and will remain in effect until May 1, 2020. At that time, we will review the state of the global pandemic and update policies as needed.

The world health community continues to monitor closely the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the disease it causes, named "coronavirus disease 2019" (COVID-19). At this time, no one knows how severe this outbreak will be. Given this uncertainty, and the fact that the seasonal influenza (flu) virus is also widespread, we are taking proactive steps to address a number of business concerns. First and foremost, we want to maintain a safe workplace and encourage and/or adopt practices protecting the health of employees, customers, visitors or others. We also want to ensure the continuity of business operations.

Effective Monday, March 16, 2020 NIHB will move to 100% telecommuting until May 1, 2020, at which time this policy will be reviewed, renewed, and/or revised. ***As of the date of this memo, the telecommuting option under this policy will end on March 30<sup>th</sup>.*** During this period, employees must be telework-ready in accordance with NIHB Policy 2.18 and demonstrate the same level of productivity as if working onsite. Established work times and hours will remain intact as currently established and agreed upon with your supervisor unless an employee requests, and his/her supervisor agrees to, a new work schedule. The CEO will have a brief check-in call each morning with the Senior Staff. Department Directors are expected to have a brief morning check in with their staff, as well. We will schedule a full staff check-in meeting by phone once per week for, ideally, not more than one hour.

In order to help support staff telework, during this time NIHB will be providing all staff members a stipend to help cover internet and utility costs in the amount of \$75.00 in addition to a cell phone stipend in the amount of 50.00 each month for a total of \$250.00 for March (pro-rated) and April.

If you wish to work in the NIHB office, you may do so; however, we strongly discourage it. If and when you are in the office, employees must take steps to reduce the potential transmission of germs and viruses in the workplace. Employees are asked to do the following:

- Wash your hands frequently with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your nose and mouth with tissues whenever you sneeze or cough, and discard used tissues in the trash immediately.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces with provided anti-viral/anti-bacterial wipes. (this includes your workstation, chair, laptop, docking station, monitor, keyboard, mouse, door knobs and phone)
- Practice “social distancing”, maintaining, to the fullest extent possible, at least six (6) feet between you and others.

Should NIHB staff have dependent children or other dependents within their care, and such children or dependents must remain in their home due to closure of schools or the lack of available or safe child care, NIHB staff will not be required to take paid time off while the children or other dependents are in the home and the applicable staff member is simultaneously telecommuting in accordance with this policy.

## **Symptoms**

It is critical that employees do not report to work while they are experiencing respiratory or other symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue. Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that employees remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100.4 degrees F or 37.8 degrees C) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

***If you are feeling sick or exhibiting any of these symptoms, then do not come to the NIHB office or engage in any in-person, work-related event or meeting.***

Related, if you are at the NIHB office or any in-person, work-related event, and begin to feel ill or exhibit any of these symptoms, ***you are to leave immediately.*** You

should use sick leave in accordance with standing NIHB employee policies. Sick leave must still be requested on PayChex and approved by supervisors.

Many times, with the best of intentions, employees report to work even though they feel ill. We provide paid leave and other benefits to compensate employees who are unable to work due to illness. Employees who report to work ill will be sent home in accordance with these health guidelines. Moreover, until further notice, an employee who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (as described) and who, in spite of his/her awareness of these symptoms knowingly places his/her coworkers at risk of infection by coming to the workplace may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. When in doubt, employees should contact the human resources for further guidance.

Additionally, due to NIHB's commitment to safety, effective immediately NIHB is implementing the following travel restrictions:

### **Business Travel**

NIHB is suspending business travel through May 4, 2020. The Chief Programs Officer is currently working with all staff to audit planned business travel through July 31, 2020. This audit will help to determine the necessity of any upcoming or pending business travel. NIHB meetings and events will be retooled to take place virtually or to be postponed until such a time as an in-person meeting is deemed practical and safe. Employees are encouraged to use telephone and video conferencing instead of face-to-face meetings, as much as possible during this time. IT support services are available to employees who need assistance with this technology.

### **Travel Cancellation Procedures**

If business travel has already been booked and requires cancellation, please work with your Department Director and Terri Caldwell (the NIHB travel agent) to properly cancel travel and receive an airfare and hotel refund or credit, if applicable. Set up phone or online conferencing to replace the in-person meetings. Please make sure your supervisor and Department Director know the status of all meetings and events cancelled or postponed due to this temporary travel suspension.

### **Personal Travel**

In implementing this policy we understand that employees may wish to travel in order to telework and be with remote family members during this time, and we

respect that decision. Such personal travel must be completed no later than April 24, 2020 in order to ensure that the employee is ready to return to NIHB's offices as soon as possible, should we be able to return to work. Further, employees choosing to conduct personal travel must be telework-ready in accordance with NIHB Policy 2.18 and demonstrate the same level of productivity as if working onsite. The COVID-19 policies are being put in place specifically to take appropriate measures to assist NIHB with containing the spread of the virus within the workplace, and to take steps to protect the wellness of all employees, individually and as a whole. Employees who choose to travel during this time must provide detailed travel information to HR in advance of undertaking travel. This applies to travel that is in excess of 100 miles from the Organization's headquarters if that travel requires the use of common airline, train or other public modes of transportation or carries the potential for enhanced risk of exposure to COVID-19.

### **Procedures Upon Return from Personal Travel**

Employees who choose to pursue personal travels during the time-frame of this policy will be restricted from returning to the NIHB office for 14 calendar days after returning to the Washington, DC area, for purposes of quarantine to ensure that they have not been exposed to, or acquired, COVID-19. Contact HR if and when this policy directly impacts you. Employees who become ill with virus-like symptoms during or upon returning from travel will need to contact a health care provider as soon as possible, and in all cases, before returning to the NIHB worksite.

NIHB reserves the right to restrict any employee from entering the NIHB office or attending any in-person, work-related events to the extent that NIHB concludes, in good faith, that the employee's presence may pose a direct threat to the health and well-being of the employee or others.

NIHB will continue to monitor the situation and provide guidance as more information on the extent and severity of the outbreak becomes available.

More information about the "coronavirus disease 2019" (COVID-19) can be obtained from the CDC site, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). If you have any questions about NIHB policy or need additional guidance, please contact HR. We appreciate your cooperation as we work together to stop the spread of this and other viruses in the workplace.