

DEPARTMENT POLICY

V.I. Department of Education COVID-19 Employee Policy

May 23, 2022 (revised)

Office of the Commissioner



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION



COVID-19 EMPLOYEE POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to inform Virgin Islands Department of Education employees of the Department's operations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ABBREVIATIONS

VIDE:	Virgin Islands Department of Education
VIDOH:	Virgin Islands Department of Health
CDC:	U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
EAP:	Employee Assistance Program

ACCEPTABLE COVID-19 TESTS

The approved COVID-19 tests that are accepted are:

- COVID-19 molecular (e.g., RT-PCR, viral or nucleic acid amplification) test from a nasal or throat or saliva swab sample OR
- COVID-19 antigen (rapid) test from a nasal or throat swab sample

Please note that At-Home COVID-19 tests will not be accepted as verification. The benefit of an At-Home COVID-19 test is that it will immediately tell you if you are negative or positive, so that you know your status. An At-Home COVID-19 test can result in a false negative or a false positive, which you will not be aware of. Once an At-Home test result is positive, the employee will be required to self-quarantine and schedule an appointment with a private lab or VIDOH to confirm their results.

POLICY

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) continues to follow the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in conjunction with the Virgin Islands Department of Health (VIDOH) to reduce the further spread of the COVID-19 disease in the Territory.

SITUATIONAL TELEWORK

Effective Monday, February 28, 2022, Governor Albert Bryan, Jr terminated the "Safer-at-Home Phase" and directed all Government of the Virgin Islands employees to return to in-person office hours. VIDE allowed its employees an additional week of telework so staff could make the necessary arrangements for childcare; all VIDE employees were directed to return to in-person office hours on March 7, 2022.

Telework is approved on a case-by-case basis due to official worksite closure, inclement weather, natural disasters, epidemics, pandemics, or during a drill for the aforementioned. Situational telework can be approved by your immediate supervisor, which includes duties and location if applicable. As a reminder, permission to telework can be revoked by immediate supervisors, agency head or the Governor of the Virgin Islands for any reason. Failure to advise your immediate supervisor of teleworking outside of the territory will be considered abuse of the telework policy and can impact current and future telework approvals. Please review *Telework Policy* for more information.



Business with the Public

VIDE affirms that the health and safety of its employees are of primary concern. As a result of the recommended precautionary measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, VIDE will continue to limit in-person interactions at its State and District worksites and public schools in the St. Thomas-St. John School District and the St. Croix School District. Thus, we ask that all business be conducted electronically, whenever possible. We understand that there is some business that requires in-person interaction; therefore, directors and managers have been asked to implement and adhere to in-person public interaction protocols for each respective office.

Below is guidance for employees:

Personal Safety

Your safety is important. As VIDE continues to take preventative measures, it is imperative that employees continue to wash hands, use hand sanitizer (when handwashing is not possible), wipe down work surfaces, wipe down shared equipment after usage, and maintain social distancing when possible. In addition, all employees are required to comply with the following to reduce exposure:

- Contact your direct supervisor immediately if you or someone in your household is experiencing coronavirus symptoms and inform supervisor of your vaccination status. Immediately self-quarantine.
- Contact your direct supervisor immediately if you and/or someone you have been in contact with has tested positive for COVID-19 and inform supervisor of your vaccination status. Immediately self-quarantine.
- Supervisors should reach out to their superiors immediately for guidance and next steps
- All employees are to self-monitor for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
- **Do not come to work if you are sick or if you have been determined to be a close contact of someone diagnosed with COVID-19.** You should remain in quarantine (for the designated days per your vaccination status) until you receive a negative result from the VIDOH or a private lab.

Per the Thirty-fifth Executive Order and/or any order/proclamation by the Governor, the following applies:

Mask Mandate

Employees and visitors/guests are required to wear a face mask or facial covering when entering/exiting worksites or cubicles; when entering shared areas, such as break rooms, restrooms, and hallways; and when using shared office equipment, etc. Failure to adhere to the mask mandate may result in progressive discipline and/or removal from the workplace. Additionally, the following guidelines apply:

1. Masks or facial coverings must cover both the nose and mouth of the individual.
2. Masks with exhalation valves or vents (see images below) are not acceptable and do not prevent the spread of COVID-19.
3. Ski masks and stocking caps are prohibited as facial coverings.
4. Masks are required in outdoor areas of all schools in the Territory of the Virgin Islands of the U.S.
5. Masks or facial coverings do not need to be worn inside the kitchen area by staff that have been fully vaccinated, as approved by VIDOH.

Social Distancing

In coordination with the Commissioner of the VIDOH and in alignment with guidance from the CDC, all persons are required to maintain social distancing of at least four (4) feet away from other people that are not of their same household, whenever possible. All employees are urged to continue to wash



their hands, utilize hand sanitizer, and practice proper respiratory etiquette (including coughing into the elbow) as often as possible.

COVID-19 Testing Requirements

Employees of VIDE will be required, either during exposure and/or returning back to work, to take a COVID-19 test through VIDOH or a private lab. All VIDE employees required to provide a COVID-19 test will need to follow the guidelines set by VIDE. Refusal to present an approved COVID-19 test can result in progressive disciplinary action as per Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA), VIDE Employee Handbook and/or GVI Employee Handbook.

Close Contact

For COVID-19, a close contact is defined as anyone who was within six (6) feet of an infected person without a mask for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

Employees Testing Positive for COVID-19

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, the employee must self-quarantine, notify their immediate supervisor, and call VIDOH at **340-712-6299 (STX)** or **340-776-1519 (STT-STJ)** for additional guidance. Immediate supervisors will contact their superiors for additional guidance. Superiors will contact the Office of Human Resources for additional guidance.

All Principals, Directors and Senior Leaders must provide the Contact Tracing Sheet within 24 hours of being notified by employee.

Guidelines for testing positive:

- If an employee has tested positive, the employee must self-quarantine, per VIDOH Guidelines, regardless of symptoms. Please see below guidelines per VIDOH:
 - All employees testing positive will need to quarantine for five (5) days from the positive date. You may return to in-person activities on the 6th day after the positive test date. **A negative test is not required. A doctor's note is not required.**
 - **Regardless of vaccine status:**
 - When around in-home family members wear a well-fitting mask around mouth and nose for 10 days.
 - If the employee is still experiencing symptoms after the 5th day, the employee must stay in isolation for ten (10) days and must consult a doctor. **A doctor's note will be required.**

You cannot test out of isolation at any point. Isolation is time based as explained above.

Reporting a COVID-19 Absence

The following guidelines have been provided by the Department of Labor, VIDOP and VIDOH:

Effective this memo, the temporary leave by the Department of Labor for the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which allowed the agency to utilize COVID-19 Admin Leave, is no longer applicable.



Positive employee:

Employees who have tested positive must do the following:

- Quarantine immediately.
- Immediately advise their immediate supervisor so contact tracing could commence within the office.
- When submitting documents for **Payroll**:
 - If an employee is asymptomatic or experiencing mild symptoms and is able to telework, the employee will document on their timesheet.
 - If the employee is unable to telework due to their symptoms, the employee will do the following:
 - A Leave Slip must be filled out completely and documented in the employee's timesheets. This must be submitted to the Payroll Division when submitting payroll.
 - Leave options are:
 - Accrued Sick Leave;
 - Accrued Annual Leave;
 - Administrative Leave (Employee must have exhausted all accrued sick and annual leave, before requesting, in writing, to the Commissioner for approval)
 - Per Bill No. 33-0341, School Nurses as medical personnel are able to receive up to eighty hours of Administrative Leave as long as there is a medical pandemic or territorial state of emergency.
- A positive test result is required to be sent **ONLY** to the employee's immediate supervisor by the employee. These results should not be sent beyond the immediate supervisor.
- A doctor's note is not required for the first 5 days of being positive.
- Employees needing any additional time after the 5th day will need to provide a doctor's note for any additional time.
- Per VIDOH guidelines, after five (5) days of quarantine, the Positive employee is able to return to work with no restrictions on the 6th day.
- A letter will be provided to the positive employee by VIDE Human Resources Office.

Exposed employee:

When an employee has been exposed to a COVID-19-positive individual, contingent on the employee's vaccination status, the following will occur:

Employee needs to immediately advise their immediate supervisor. Information that is needed by immediate supervisor is:

- Does the exposed employee live in the same household as the positive?
- If positive individual lives in the same household, are there any students and/or other VIDE employees that also live in the same household?
- When was the last date of exposure with the positive individual, if they do not live together?
- Is the exposed employee fully vaccinated?



Below are the instructions contingent on the vaccination status:

Vaccinated:

This is only for individuals who have received their first vaccine, second vaccine and booster(s).

If the COVID-19 positive **lives with the exposed**, then the employee:

- MUST quarantine immediately.
- MUST immediately advise their immediate supervisor.
- Will be allowed to telework if applicable. If telework is not an option, a Leave Slip must be filled out completely and documented in the employee's timesheets. This must be submitted to the Payroll Division when submitting payroll.
 - Leave options are:
 - Accrued Sick Leave;
 - Accrued Annual Leave;
 - Administrative Leave (Employee must have exhausted all accrued sick and annual leave before requesting, in writing, to the Commissioner for approval)
- If the employee does not have any COVID-19 symptoms, then:
 - **No Quarantine** is necessary for employees up to date on their vaccine and booster(s)
 - **No Quarantine** is necessary for employees who have been exposed and have a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the past 90 days (on a viral test) without symptoms.

If the COVID-19 Positive does not **live with the exposed**, then:

- **No Quarantine** is necessary for employees up to date on their vaccine and booster(s)
- **No Quarantine** is necessary for employees who have been exposed and have a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the past 90 days (on a viral test) without symptoms.
- **Isolate** if symptoms develop, get tested and wait for results. Wear a well-fitting mask and continue to take precautions until day 10.
 - If telework is not applicable during isolation:
 - A Leave Slip must be filled out completely and documented in the employee's timesheets. This must be submitted to the Payroll Division when submitting payroll.
 - Leave options are:
 - Accrued Sick Leave;
 - Accrued Annual Leave;
 - Administrative Leave (Employee must have exhausted all accrued sick and annual leave before requesting, in writing, to the Commissioner for approval)
 - If employee tests positive after the 5th date, please refer to "Positive Employee" insert above. A positive test result is required to be sent **ONLY** to the employee's immediate supervisor by the employee. These results should not be sent beyond the immediate supervisor.
 - Employees needing any additional time after the 5th day, will need to provide a doctor's note for any additional time.



- A letter will be provided to the exposed employee by VIDE Human Resources Office.

Please note that testing with VIDO is free. If the employee chooses to test with a private lab, they may do so at their own expense. Employees will have to adhere to Cigna's coverage. VIDE will advise the earliest the employee is able to test, contingent on their vaccination status.

It is always the employee's responsibility to ensure there is communication with their immediate supervisor(s) while on leave. If an employee does not communicate in a timely manner, it can affect the employee's pay.

Unvaccinated:

This is only for individuals who have not completed all vaccine doses and booster(s).

- Quarantine for five (5) days and get tested on the sixth (6th) day if you have had a close contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive. Wear a well-fitted mask at home and watch for symptoms for 10 days. If symptoms develop, isolate, get tested and wear a well-fitted mask.
 - If telework is not applicable during quarantine:
 - A Leave Slip must be filled out completely and documented in the employee's timesheets. This must be submitted to the Payroll Division when submitting payroll.
 - Leave options are:
 - Accrued Sick Leave;
 - Accrued Annual Leave;
 - Administrative Leave (Employee must have exhausted all accrued sick and annual leave before requesting, in writing, to the Commissioner for approval)
 - If employee tests positive after the 5th date, please refer to "Positive Employee" insert above. A positive test result is required to be sent **ONLY** to the employee's immediate supervisor by the employee. These results should not be sent beyond the immediate supervisor.
 - Employees needing any additional time after the 5th day will need to provide a doctor's note for any additional time.
 - A letter will be provided to the exposed employee by VIDE Human Resources Office.
- After Quarantine take precautions for 10 days and wear a well-fitted mask

Please note that testing with VIDO is free. If the employee chooses to test with a private lab, they may do so at their own expense. Employees will have to adhere with CIGNA's coverage. VIDE will advise when is the earliest the employee is able to test, contingent on their vaccination status.

It is always the employee's responsibility to ensure there is communication with their immediate supervisor(s) while on leave. If an employee does not communicate in a timely manner, it can affect the employee's pay.



Personal Travel

Employees are strongly encouraged not to travel during the pandemic in order to reduce exposure to COVID-19. **Employees choosing to travel outside of the Territory on personal or official duty, regardless of vaccination, must follow the below instructions:**

Prior to Travel:

- If an employee **chooses** to travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, for any reason and/or time, they shall give their immediate supervisor timely notice, advise on the type of leave they will be utilizing, and if they are leaving the territory.
- If the employee requires accrued annual leave, they will submit their leave request to their direct supervisor, as they have done in the past.
- Accrued sick leave can only be utilized if proper documentation has been submitted for medical leave
- COVID-19 Vaccination card must be shown to immediate supervisor PRIOR to traveling (if applicable) to determine amount of days the employee needs to quarantine (if applicable).

Post Travel:

Travel for Vaccinated Employees:

- If an employee is fully vaccinated, they are able to return to work immediately upon return pursuant to the guidelines of VIDOH.

Travel for Not Fully Vaccinated Employees:

- If an employee is not fully vaccinated, they must quarantine for 3 days and test on the 4th day. Employees should take into consideration that their overall leave should include these days when requesting their leave. Employees must advise their immediate supervisor prior to leaving on when they will be flying back into the territory to ensure proper leave has been requested.
- Earlier protocol regarding testing and coverage applies.
 - Example: Travel back to the territory on Saturday, January 1. Employee can test Wednesday, January 5, and if negative return to work on Thursday, January 6.

Additionally:

- If an employee becomes stranded due to travel restrictions, the employee will be required to use their accrued annual leave to cover the time away from work. Proper communication with immediate supervisors, with as much notice as possible, is required in order to ensure adequate work coverage.
- An employee who does not have annual or sick leave, is required to request approval in writing from the Commissioner to utilize Leave Without Pay (LWOP) prior to travel.

Professional Travel

Similar to personal travel, VIDE encourages all employees not to travel during the coronavirus pandemic for professional reasons. However, if you have been granted approval for work-related travel, you must still abide by the policies for returning to the office.

Employees choosing to travel outside of the Territory on official duty, regardless of vaccination status, must follow the below instructions:

Prior to travel:



- If there is an option to conduct business remotely, that should be the first choice
- If virtual training is unavailable, employees must follow the same policies for personal travel
- COVID-19 Vaccination card must be shown to immediate supervisor PRIOR to traveling (if applicable) to determine amount of days the employee needs to quarantine (if applicable).

Post Travel:

Travel for Vaccinated Employees:

- If an employee is fully vaccinated, they are able to return to work immediately upon return pursuant to the guidelines of VIDOH.

Travel for Not Fully Vaccinated Employees:

- If an employee is not fully vaccinated, they must quarantine for three (3) days and test on the 4th day and provide their immediate supervisor with a negative test to return to work.
- Employees that are unable to telework will be granted administrative leave during the 3-day quarantine. This should be approved by the Commissioner prior to the employee traveling.
 - Example: Travel back to the territory on Saturday, January 1. Employee can test Wednesday, January 5

Additionally:

Situational telework can be approved by your immediate supervisor if this is for Professional travel, which includes duties and location, if applicable. As a reminder, permission to telework can be revoked by immediate supervisors, agency head or the Governor of the Virgin Islands for any reason. Failure to advise your direct supervisor of teleworking outside of the territory will be considered abuse of the telework policy and can impact current and future telework approvals.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Government of the Virgin Islands and Cigna provides confidential and voluntary assistance through its Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to all employees and their family members covered on their plan who may be faced with challenges with COVID-19 and other issues. Cigna has provided you webcasts available online at www.cigna.com/eapwebcasts. For more information, please call:

- 1.888.371.1125
- Log in to www.mycigna.com
- Employer ID: usvigoovernment

Cigna offers all active employees and retired employees under 65 access to medical services remotely through MDLive as part of your medical plan. Cigna Telehealth Connection lets you get the care needed—including most prescriptions (when appropriate) – for a wide range of minor conditions. Telehealth connects employees with a board-certified doctor via video chat or phone, without leaving their home or office.

- Choose when: Day or night, weekdays, weekends, and holidays.
- Choose where: Home, work, or on the go.
- Choose how: Phone or video chat.

How to access?

1. Go to Cignabehavioral.com to search for a video telehealth specialist.
2. Call to make an appointment with your selected provider. Telehealth visits with Cigna Behavioral Health network providers cost the same as an in-office visit.



Please note:

Cigna’s customer cost-share waiver program for COVID-19 treatment concluded on February 15, 2021. An example of treatment may be hospitalization. This means that “treatment is no longer covered at 100%, the coverage will revert to the plan benefits for hospitalization or outpatient treatment that may be necessary. You will continue to have \$0 cost-sharing for all FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccines and diagnostic COVID-19 testing and related screening office or virtual visit, as required by the CARES Act. Please remember that a referral is needed for testing if you have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19. Members of the plan are not required to pay administrative fees to the provider that administers the vaccine. However, if other services are provided at the time of the vaccine administration, such as a chronic condition evaluation, you will be charged a co-pay for those services.

Things you can do to support your wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ✓ Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- ✓ Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- ✓ Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- ✓ Connect with others via video or phone chat. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

VERSION CONTROL

Modification Date	Modification Reason	Modified By
<i>02/2021</i>	<i>Updates to include travel requirements</i>	<i>Commissioner Berry-Benjamin</i>
<i>04/2021</i>	<i>Updates to include updated testing upon return per VIDOH</i>	<i>Commissioner Berry-Benjamin</i>
<i>01/2022</i>	<i>Updates to include reimbursement for Professional Travel COVID-19 Tests</i>	<i>Commissioner Berry-Benjamin</i>
<i>05/2022</i>	<i>Updates to include suspension of COVID-Admin and revised VIDOH isolation/quarantine guidelines</i>	<i>Commissioner Berry-Benjamin</i>

APPENDIX

Masks with exhalation valves or vents that are not approved:

