



Governor's Office of Employee Relations


ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

MICHAEL N. VOLFORTE
Director

MEMORANDUM

March 9, 2020

TO: Directors of Human Resources

FROM: Michael N. Volforte 

SUBJECT: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

As our response to COVID-19 has evolved and will continue to evolve, many questions have arisen about working with our union counterparts to respond to their concerns. The union questions we are aware of so far have been centered on emergency assignments/deployments and associated employee safety concerns, particularly with respect to employees who are working with Persons Under Investigation (PUI) and transporting specimens for testing.

As you know, our first priority is to ensure that resources necessary to respond to and contain COVID-19 to protect public health and safety are available without delay. As we execute this effort, it is important to remember that we honor our commitments to open dialogue and information sharing with our employee representative counterparts in order to ensure that they have the information needed to properly inform their members and assist the State in this emergency response. Therefore, it is important to our response efforts that we keep our union counterparts abreast of potential or actual emergency assignments/deployments that would affect their members and to address their concerns to the greatest extent possible to ensure our response needs are being met. Such circumstances would include, but not be limited to:

- Changes in work location, including field deployments to work with PUI and transport specimens for testing. Also be ready to address union concerns regarding safety of employees performing such assignments.
- Any other change in work location to support other emergency measures or implement agency COOP protocols
- Changes in work hours including emergency schedule changes as well as voluntary and mandatory OT
- Cancellation of approved leave or inability to approve new leave requests

If you have questions regarding whether other topics merit discussion with your union counterparts, don't hesitate to contact the Governor's Office of Employee Relations at 518-474-6988.

We believe that the best way to engage the unions to apprise them of any such plans and evaluate their concerns is to work with your agency-level labor/management counterparts. Accordingly, if you are aware of planning for emergency measures or execution of such emergency measures, seek approval from your agency Executive Team to brief your L/M counterparts and review any concerns they may have. Your agency Executive Team will be best positioned to know the details of such planned measures and give appropriate guidance as to what information can be shared. Where possible, we feel it is better to relay information in advance of executing such measures, while recognizing some resources need to be deployed immediately and changes need to be implemented quickly.

For assistance in evaluating and responding to concerns or objections raised by your union counterparts, please call 518-474-6988 and indicate that you need assistance responding to union concerns related to COVID-19. Your call will be directed to someone who can assist you. You should also contact GOER if you are having difficulty getting information needed to respond to union concerns.

Thank you.

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