



**To:** Via Employees  
**From:** Lisa Walkiewicz, President & CEO  
**Date:** March 12, 2020  
**Re:** Health & Safety: COVID-19 Update

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The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) continues to closely monitor the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the disease it causes, named “coronavirus disease 2019” (COVID-19).

Prevention is our priority. First and foremost, we want to maintain a safe workplace and encourage practices protecting the health of employees, participants, visitors and others. We also want to ensure the continuity of organizational operations. We will continue to send communications as more information becomes available.

### **What You Can Do**

Help reduce the transmission of communicable diseases in the workplace. Employees are reminded to:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
- Use gloves when providing personal care to participants that includes assistance with toileting, feeding, managing behavioral incidents and administering first aid.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, sneeze or cough into the crook of your elbow - NOT YOUR HANDS.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid people who are sick with respiratory symptoms.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces; wear disposable gloves when doing so.
- Avoid crowded places.
- Do not shake hands (or even bump fists) for the duration of this medical event.
- Avoid unnecessary travel.

### **Key Times to Clean Hands Include:**

- After blowing one’s nose, coughing or sneezing.
- After using the restroom.
- Before and after providing care for another person who needs assistance.
- Before eating or preparing food.
- After contact with animals or pets.

Via provides hand sanitizer throughout the workplace and in common areas; additional dispensers will be installed early next week. Cleaning sprays and wipes will be provided to clean high traffic areas like the Cafeteria, Workshop and Adult Training Facility on a daily schedule.



### **Working with Participants**

Please model these preventative steps as outlined above and encourage participants to do the same. Similar information will be sent home to participants this week. A copy of this communication will be emailed to staff as a reference.

### **COVID-19 Symptoms**

Common coronaviruses can cause symptoms similar to a common cold, such as fever, cough, and sore throat. The symptoms that are currently being seen with COVID-19 are fever and respiratory symptoms such as cough and shortness of breath.

### **What to Do If You Are Not Feeling Well**

It is critical that employees do not report to work while they are experiencing respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue. Currently, the CDC recommends that employees remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Seek medical attention if you have reason to believe you have been exposed to coronavirus or influenza. Call your healthcare provider before visiting a healthcare facility. Talk to your physician if you need more information or for further recommendations. For those employees who are covered under Via's Health plan, you can use *Virtual Medicine Services* to talk to a doctor anytime. Go to [HighmarkBlueShield.com](http://HighmarkBlueShield.com) and click "Find a Doctor" or call Member Service 888-258-3428 and follow the prompts.

Many times, with the best of intentions, employees report to work even though they feel ill. We provide paid leave (PLB) 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.

If employees contract the COVID-19 and cannot come to work, employees may use their Paid Leave Bank (PLB) time or take the time off as unpaid. If the employee is not eligible or does not have PLB time, they may take the time as unpaid. Employees who are full-time and have been employed with Via for one (1) year can apply for short-term disability under Via's short-term disability policy. The waiting period under this policy is seven (7) days. After the seven (7) day waiting period eligible employees will receive 60% of their weekly pay for up to 90 days.

Please contact the human resources department with any questions or concerns.

### **Additional Resources:**

- CDC Resources: [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov)
- Health Bureau - City of Bethlehem: [www.bethlehem-pa.gov](http://www.bethlehem-pa.gov)
- Health Bureau - City of Allentown: [www.allentownpa.gov](http://www.allentownpa.gov)
- Health Bureau - City of Easton: [www.easton-pa.com](http://www.easton-pa.com)
- Via's Policy HR-02 BloodBorne Pathogens and Exposure Control Plan located here: G:\Policies and Procedures\ACTIVE POLICIES\ACTIVE