



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

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MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: DoD Workplace Guidance for Final Reentry of DoD Civilian Personnel

References: (a) Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Guidance for Commanders' Risk-Based Responses and Implementation of the Health Protection Condition Framework During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic," April 29, 2021
(b) Force Health Protection Guidance,
<https://www.defense.gov/Spotlights/Coronavirus-DOD-Response/Latest-DOD-Guidance/>

The impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues to have a lasting effect not only on our country, but on the Department in the way we work to accomplish our mission. During this period, DoD personnel have demonstrated great resolve and dedication as the pandemic forced an unexpected cultural shift that required us to reimagine the way work is perceived and how to accomplish the mission. Whether working from home or remaining at the worksite, our workforce has repeatedly proven its tenacity, resiliency, and dedication. Everyone's commitment to the Department's mission and to each other is not only admirable and appreciated, but is a cornerstone to our success.

In the summer of 2021, we conducted listening sessions to learn from the experiences of the Total Force. We overwhelmingly heard concerns for a safe and healthy work environment and a desire for leaders to reimagine the "future of work" while promoting an inclusive culture regardless of worksite or status. Informed by the Secretary of Defense's priorities and your feedback, we will continue to ensure our policies lay the foundation for responsive, data-driven decision making.

Even before the pandemic, DoD policy has been for telework to be actively promoted and authorized for the maximum number of positions to the extent that mission readiness is not jeopardized. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is reviewing and incorporating flexibilities such as telework into the Department's civilian employee human capital strategies and personnel policies. These actions will improve the DoD civilian employee experience and leverage innovation and productivity gained through flexible workplace policies. Continuation of flexibilities used during the COVID-19 pandemic increases the DoD's efficiency and effectiveness, as well as allows the Department to better attract and retain those with the necessary skills and abilities needed to accomplish current and future missions.

Some DoD civilian employees have been on full-time telework (with remote work treated as telework for the purposes of this memorandum) since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and have not returned to the workplace other than on a de minimis basis. Other DoD

civilian employees have had work schedules that differ from their organization's regular schedules, such as shift work to maintain physical distancing or a flexible schedule related to dependent care. Supervisors must begin discussions with civilian employees in these two categories to make plans for their work locations and work schedules going forward. Specific reentry plans will be dependent on organizational needs, the Health Protection Condition framework, and force health protection guidance.

Absent an urgent and compelling mission need, DoD Components will provide 30-days advance notification in writing prior to recalling or adjusting the work schedules of DoD civilian employees in the two categories above. Personnel who have been able to accomplish the essential functions of their positions while teleworking throughout the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic or on the alternative work schedule will not typically be subject to a shortened notification period. Components may prescribe longer advance notice standards. Supervisors may adjust the work locations and work schedules for DoD civilian employees who are not in the two categories above based on organizational needs, the Health Protection Condition framework, and force health protection guidance and do not need to provide 30-days advance notification.

The Department fulfilled its national consultation rights (NCR) obligation to notify the appropriate labor organizations that have been granted NCR. Components must satisfy labor relations obligations at the various levels of exclusive recognition where such obligations exist. If Components choose to stagger final reentry based upon completion of negotiations, Components will disseminate updated local guidance, to include information regarding the final reentry of bargaining unit employees, and initiate the final reentry of bargaining unit employees in accordance with negotiated agreements. The Department is committed to working with union partners and has engaged with national unions for their input into its reentry guidance.

Components will comply with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 791 et seq., as amended, with respect to reentry of DoD civilian personnel into the workplace.

The attachment provides additional resources to assist Components in planning for final workplace reentry. Components are not required to issue supplemental guidance. Questions regarding reentry procedures or requirements should be routed to your Component-specified reentry point of contact.



Attachment:
As stated

RESOURCES FOR WORKFORCE FINAL REENTRY IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

The following resources are available to assist Components in preparing for workforce reentry:

- Force Health Protection Guidance
 - <https://www.defense.gov/Spotlights/Coronavirus-DOD-Response/Latest-DOD-Guidance/>
 - Components should reference [defense.gov](https://www.defense.gov) for the latest guidance for the DoD on subjects such as mask-wearing, physical distancing, meetings, and travel.

- Office of Personnel Management Memorandum, “Additional Guidance on Post-Reentry Personnel Policies and Work Environment,” July 23, 2021
 - <https://www.chcoc.gov/content/additional-guidance-post-reentry-personnel-policies-and-work-environment>
 - This guidance provides answers to common questions regarding agency authorities with respect to the subjects of telework, pay, hours of work, travel, labor relations, and employee relations.

- Employee Assistance Programs
 - As Components work through the reentry process, DoD supervisors and civilian employees are reminded that employee assistance programs are available as a resource during this transition period.