

Office of Developmental Disabilities Services

Frequently Asked Questions: ODDS Employment Services for Support to Navigate Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our lives in many ways. Changes to our jobs have been part of that. Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) supports what can be used for support to navigate these changes.

Making a Plan for Work or Community Activities

Everyone should make a plan if they are going to work or participate in community activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes making an informed choice about whether to work or participate in community activities. It also includes making a plan to be as safe as possible no matter what you decide.

Your case manager, employment provider, or others you trust can help you with this plan if you want. Here is a tool you can use to make your plan for work and being as safe as possible: <https://go.usa.gov/xwEkA>

Question: What work changes or accommodations can I request from my employer?

Answer: Some workers may want to request a work change or accommodation because of the potential for exposure to COVID-19. Always keep open communication with your employer about concerns you have related to COVID-19 exposure or symptoms. Your employment provider or someone else you trust can help you make this type of request from your employer.

The Job Accommodations Network (JAN) offers information and examples regarding types of accommodations that might be helpful to request from your employer during the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 including: using plexiglass, tables, or other barriers to ensure minimum distances between customers and coworkers; training and access to the protective equipment you need to be safe on the job (such as gloves and masks); temporary job restructuring of marginal job duties; or modifying a work schedule so you can perform the essential functions of the job while reducing exposure to others in the workplace or while commuting. More information is available at: <https://askjan.org/>.

Many employers are offering increased flexibility to all employees to reduce the risk of exposing employees to COVID-19. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other anti-discrimination laws require that employers provide reasonable accommodations in the workplace for individuals with disabilities, so long as it does not create an undue hardship. A person with a disability who has one of the [medical conditions](#) that [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) states may put them at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, and compromised immunity) may be entitled to a reasonable accommodation under the ADA. More information is available at: <https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>.

Question: Can I take time off work because of COVID-19?

Answer: Depending on a few factors, you might have multiple options for paid time off. For example:

- Your employer may have an employer-sponsored medical leave plan to support employees during this time.
- Federal and state laws have expanded paid leave options because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, if you or a family member gets sick from COVID-19, you may have up to two weeks paid leave through the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act. More information regarding federal legislation is available at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-questions> Note that this is administered through the United States Department of Labor and not ODDS. Eligibility for this may depend on a few factors, including the size of your employer and how long you have been working in your job.
- If you get sick, you may also qualify for paid leave through Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA). This is administered through Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI). More information is available at: <https://www.oregon.gov/boli/workers/pages/oregon-family-leave.aspx>.

You can ask your supervisor or human resources representative for more information regarding your options for paid time off from work due to COVID-19. If you would like support to have this conversation with your employer, you can ask your employment provider or someone you trust for help.

Question: Can I return to my job if I get sick or need to stay home because of COVID-19?

Answer: An employee who is sick may have the right to protected job leave. This means you can take time off and return to your job. Generally, this time is unpaid unless you have paid vacation, sick time, or other paid leave to use.

Protected job leave has been expanded to include COVID-19 related situations, such as caring for children out of school, or staying home under the advice of a public official or healthcare provider to self-quarantine. Eligibility for this may depend on the size of your employer, the length you have been working in your job, and other factors.

You can ask your supervisor or human resources representative for more information regarding your options for job leave due to COVID-19. If you would like support to have this conversation with your employer, you can ask your employment provider or someone you trust for help. More information is available at:

- U.S. Department of Labor FAQ: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-questions>; <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla/pandemic>.
- Oregon-specific information from Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries: <https://www.oregon.gov/boli/workers/pages/oregon-family-leave.aspx>.

Question: Where can I get support to find a new job or work more hours?

Answer: If you have been laid off or had reduced hours, and you still want to work, then you can ask a trusted person, including your case manager or provider, about support to find a new job or a referral to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). More information on applying for VR services during the COVID-19 pandemic is available at:

<https://go.usa.gov/xwE8Q>

Question: What if I am exposed to COVID-19 on the job?

Answer: You may be eligible for worker's compensation insurance benefits. Worker's compensation is a protection for workers who are injured on the job. For some employees, exposure to COVID-19 is a risk of being an essential employee. If you think you were exposed to COVID-19 at work, and got sick, you may file a worker's compensation claim through your employer.

Resources and Information

ODDS Reopening Video: https://youtu.be/Aqp_3naDe64

ODDS Reopening Fact Sheet: <https://go.usa.gov/xwE8m>

Tools for Developing a Plan for Returning to Work or Activities in the Community:
<https://go.usa.gov/xwEkA>

Applying for VR services COVID-19: <https://go.usa.gov/xwE8Q>

ODDS Infographic on Mask Wearing: <https://go.usa.gov/xwE8V>

ODDS Infographic on Obtaining Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):
<https://go.usa.gov/xwE8w>

ODDS COVID-19 Website: <https://go.usa.gov/xwE8J>

ODDS I/DD Employment Policy: <https://go.usa.gov/xwE8M>

EEOC guidance on pandemic preparedness in the workplace:
<https://go.usa.gov/xwE8s>