

TO: Antonia Jiménez, DPSS Director
FROM: Michael Green, SEIU 721, Regional Director
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Emergency



The SEIU 721 members in DPSS are committed to working with management to ensure that employees are kept healthy and safe while we continue to deliver essential services to the residents of Los Angeles County. **Today, we call on you to do your part.** We have identified and attached *Urgent Concerns* that require your attention. We know that you will consider them seriously and in the spirit of cooperation with which they are presented. We look forward to working with you and your office to keep all Los Angeles County workers and residents healthy and safe.

URGENT CONCERNS – COVID-19 Emergency

Social Distancing

Several DPSS offices have not made accommodations to allow employees to observe the 6 feet social distancing guidelines presented by the CDC and adopted by the Board of Supervisors. For example, all three Customer Service Centers are keeping workers in cubicles that are not 6-feet apart. These conditions are endangering workers and should be corrected immediately. And, at all offices, the lunchrooms should be reconfigured to ensure that only small groups of workers can use it at any given time while maintaining the 6 -feet social distancing guidelines.

Telework

The Department must continue to expand telework and priority should be given to employees over age 65. Additionally, those with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk and those with children at home due to school or childcare closures should also be given priority.

Approval of telework is inconsistent within offices and there is inadequate guidance on when and how telework will be issued. At the El Monte office, some employees are teleworking 5 days a week while others that have underlying health conditions are only teleworking 2 days a week. This creates confusion and

uncertainty because your employees don't understand the guidelines and circumstances when telework will be approved.

Approval of telework will also help with measures to maintain 6-foot social distancing within DPSS offices.

Emergency Paid Sick Leave and FMLA Emergency Leave

While we understand that DPSS is a "frontline responder" Department, DPSS management has the discretion to approve employee requests to use these new leave programs. The Department must be prepared to communicate the guidelines to your employees and approve requests as soon as Human Resources provides the forms and guidance tomorrow, Thursday, April 9. And DPSS must not unreasonably deny requests from eligible employees many of whom have been left in desperate situations by the COVID-19 emergency.

Detected Infections at DPSS Offices

DPSS employees are testing positive for COVID-19 with greater frequency. In such instances, it is essential that DPSS communicates with staff and follows appropriate protocols to protect the health and safety of its employees.

Communication

The lack of clear, transparent, and timely communication has created a breeding ground for rumors and has left many SEIU 721 members insecure and fearful. When an infection is discovered at a DPSS office, employees must be informed immediately via email. The designated manager must investigate who the infected employee has been in contact with to ensure they self-quarantine or are tested and must also communicate the measures they will take to safeguard the health of all employees at that office. Let us know what's going on!

Because of the lack of information and communication, the following questions must be answered so we can ensure our members that the Department is taking these issues seriously:

Cleaning Protocols

Protocols should be established to ensure that offices with detected contamination are appropriately disinfected. And cleaning contractors should be staffed at adequate levels to handle the greatly increased cleaning demands.

Quarantine Protocols

Protocols must be established to ensure that employees who may have been exposed to infected co-workers are appropriately quarantined.

Testing Protocols

Quarantined employees, and others who may have been exposed, should be tested for coronavirus before they return to work, to ensure that they do not spread coronavirus to their co-workers.