

HILL COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT

COVID-19 PROCEDURES

It was unimaginable that we would one day face a pandemic such as COVID-19 that has hit our state and nation. Throughout this peril, our utmost desire is for all individuals to be safe and healthy.

Governor Abbott has been vague relating to appraisal districts and our requirements. Recommendations and suggestions have been given such as wearing face masks, washing hands, and social distancing, but no mandatory requirements.

To the extent possible and until further notice, the COVID-19 procedures enclosed in this document are written and in effect upon your request to give staff members stricter rules, protocols and precautions than what we previously had in place.

Public health guidance cannot anticipate every unique situation. Action should be taken based on common sense and wise judgment that will protect health and support economic revitalization. We must be mindful of workplace safety standards to address the needs of our workers as well as the general public.

Our most basic duty as public officials is to serve the public. Appraisal district staff members are deemed as essential employees, meaning we are required to continue performing our job responsibilities. We will strive to offer the best service possible while practicing safety precautions.

As the public enters our office, there might be a possibility that we could encounter someone that has been exposed to COVID-19. This is true when you go to the grocery store or any store or public venue for that matter. This can also occur when our office is closed to the public and you are only exposed to co-workers because you do not know who your co-workers have been in contact with outside of the office or who their family members have been exposed to.

RULES TO FOLLOW AT THE OFFICE

Masks

Employees have been issued a face mask. Employees should remain informed of and adhere to local directives regarding the use of masks in the office and around the County. We cannot force the public to wear a face mask while in our office like a private enterprise business can, but staff members are welcome to wear one.

Personal Hygiene

All employees should frequently wash hands and utilize hand sanitizer as supplied around the office throughout the day.

Touch Points

All employees should avoid touching their face or shaking hands with others.

Equipment Sharing

All employees should avoid sharing equipment as much as possible such as keypads, phones, tablets, desks, offices, supplies, etc., until such equipment has been sanitized.

*NOTE: Heather has been assigned to ensure the keypad and front desk area next to her is wiped down and sanitized after each use.

Food

No communal food should be brought into the office. This includes pizzas, lunch trays, desserts, buffet style trays, or anything else that is not individually wrapped or boxed.

Any food stored in the District refrigerator should be properly sealed and bagged. All snacks in the breakroom must be individually packaged. No containers for consumption by multiple individuals like cakes, cookies, fruit, donuts, etc. unless individually wrapped.

Additionally, staff members must maintain a 6-foot distance while in the communal areas in the office such as the breakroom during lunches or visiting in various offices and hallways.

Rosa, Heather, and Jessi are responsible for cleaning/sanitizing frequently used surfaces twice per day, or more often if need dictates (more than normal use). These cleanings will be documented and will include items such as door handles, light switches, front counter areas, breakrooms, copy machine & fax machine, and any other areas deemed necessary.

Each staff member is responsible for cleaning and sanitizing their office and surrounding area, especially after contact with the public or coworkers.

Public Access

Signage is placed around the office to remind everyone about good hygiene and social distancing practices.

No more than 6 people are allowed in the office lobby at a time. If the number reaches 6, Heather and Rosa will make a waiting list, get their phone number, and ask the public to wait in their car. Kerri will text or call to direct the person next in line to come in.

No more than 2 people in the same group can come in together and we encourage only 1 person to come in (unless it is an elderly person that needs the assistance). This will allow others within the public sector to be in the office and able conduct their own business as well.

Property owners are encouraged to discuss their property values over the telephone or by email. Each staff member that talks to a property owner should convey this message.

The public will be required to fill out the *Visitor Screening Form* at the front lobby before entering behind the glass lobby.

Appraisers have been issued a District cell phones, which can be used to Facetime property owners to discuss values and see issues as testified by the owner.

Appraisers can make appointments with property owners that are adamant about coming to the office. Making an appointment will limit the number of people in the office waiting room at the same time. The

appraiser should instruct the property owner that only 1 person should come in at a time to discuss the value. If a property owner arrives early to meet with an appraiser and the appraiser has someone else in their office, the property owner will be placed on the waiting list and asked to wait in their car. Kerri will notify them by text or call when it is their turn.

Each appraiser will maintain a safe distance with the property owner and verify the property maintains a 6-foot distance while sitting at the Appraiser's desk. All appraisers can have a property owner in their office at the same time as this will satisfy the 6-foot social distance rule. Each appraiser is responsible for letting their property owner exit at a time that will maintain a 6-foot distance from other property owners and staff members. Property owners can exit out the back door of the new addition. The appraiser is responsible for ensuring the back door closes and locks securely after the property owner leaves.

On March 18, 2020, The U.S. Senate passed H.R. 6201, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (Act) and President Trump signed the Act into law that evening. The Act temporarily provides for two new types of paid employee leave in response to the ongoing pandemic: **Public Health Emergency Leave** and **Emergency Paid Sick Leave**. A brief description of the Act is enclosed with this email. An *Employee Rights* publication is posted in the breakroom. If you have any questions about this, please do not hesitate to visit with me.

Kristi is assigned and dedicated to ensure the health protocols are being successfully implemented and followed.

The District will continue to monitor the situation and may modify or add to any of the above as the situation changes or if we receive directives from local or state leaders.

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

PAID SICK LEAVE AND EXPANDED FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE UNDER THE FAMILIES FIRST CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE ACT

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions will apply from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

▶ PAID LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

Generally, employers covered under the Act must provide employees:

Up to two weeks (80 hours, or a part-time employee's two-week equivalent) of paid sick leave based on the higher of their regular rate of pay, or the applicable state or Federal minimum wage, paid at:

- 100% for qualifying reasons #1-3 below, up to \$511 daily and \$5,110 total;
- ⅔ for qualifying reasons #4 and 6 below, up to \$200 daily and \$2,000 total; and
- Up to 10 weeks more of paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave paid at ⅓ for qualifying reason #5 below for up to \$200 daily and \$12,000 total.

A part-time employee is eligible for leave for the number of hours that the employee is normally scheduled to work over that period.

▶ ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES

In general, employees of private sector employers with fewer than 500 employees, and certain public sector employers, are eligible for up to two weeks of fully or partially paid sick leave for COVID-19 related reasons (see below). *Employees who have been employed for at least 30 days prior to their leave request may be eligible for up to an additional 10 weeks of partially paid expanded family and medical leave for reason #5 below.*

▶ QUALIFYING REASONS FOR LEAVE RELATED TO COVID-19

An employee is entitled to take leave related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work, including unable to telework, because the employee:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19;3. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis;4. is caring for an individual subject to an order described in (1) or self-quarantine as described in (2); | <ol style="list-style-type: none">5. is caring for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) due to COVID-19 related reasons; or6. is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. |
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▶ ENFORCEMENT

The U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) has the authority to investigate and enforce compliance with the FFCRA. Employers may not discharge, discipline, or otherwise discriminate against any employee who lawfully takes paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave under the FFCRA, files a complaint, or institutes a proceeding under or related to this Act. Employers in violation of the provisions of the FFCRA will be subject to penalties and enforcement by WHD.



WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

For additional information
or to file a complaint:

1-866-487-9243

TTY: 1-877-889-5627

dol.gov/agencies/whd



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