



Dear State of Missouri Team:

The impacts of COVID-19 are being felt across our state, nation, and global community. The Governor reminds us all to get better each day to maximize how we serve our fellow Missourians.

COVID-19 is not something we will be through within a day, a week, or even a month. We need to prepare ourselves for an extended period of managing this challenge. We must use this opportunity to re-shape the way we serve our citizens through innovation and creative problem solving.

We all know change is hard. But all departments have been improving how they work already. All departments reviewed their Continuity of Operations Plans in 2019 and are now implementing them. The changes we will now make in how we serve our citizens will test our services and ability to serve. Not only will our programs and services be pressure tested, each and every one of us will experience stress and pressure. Together, we will face this challenge.

We are all human and we all seek to help our fellow Missourians. The only way we can do this for the long term is to establish clear priorities.

First, we must each take care of ourselves. Healthier eating habits, exercise, and getting plenty of rest is vital.

**Clean your hands often**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

**Avoid close contact**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick

- Put distance between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Second, we must take care of each other on our teams. Stressful times require us to check in on one another, and I encourage you to partner up with a peer or co-worker in a “buddy system.” Commit to each other to check in, listen, provide advice, and stay connected as real human beings committed to problem-solving and looking out for each other.

As we work to implement extensive social distancing measures and find a new sense of normalcy, we must all be cautious to do a daily reality check and ensure we stay connected. The behavioral health impacts of changes at this pace and magnitude are real, are not to be avoided or individually buried, and require deliberate, conscious efforts to ensure we each remain healthy.

It’s important to know and establish healthy boundaries for information intake about the virus’ impact so as to not lead you toward depression or despair.

Follow this link to help ensure you employ an effective approach to behavioral health:

<https://dmh.mo.gov/disaster-services/covid-19-information#community>

These next two are helpful for both adults and children:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>

[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2)

Third, once we have ensured the health and well-being of ourselves and our teams, we have to make sure that we are providing for the health and well-being of those we serve. While COVID-19 is altering the means by which we deliver services, we also have to commit to ensuring the work we normally have done will continue.

Remember our current duties as Missouri citizens: wash, clean and social distancing. See <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html>

We can use our ENGAGE 2.0 employee development and growth initiative to help each other at this time.

It is crucial for supervisors and team members to stay engaged with one another during this time so that everyone has what they need personally and professionally. Face-to-face dialogue has been at the heart of monthly ENGAGE conversations since we started.

But we are in an extraordinary situation and, therefore, we are adapting ENGAGE to the times. To put social distancing into practice, you should continue your ENGAGE conversations every month but do not hold them face-to-face. Using FaceTime, WebEx, or simply talking with each other on the phone are good ways to ensure connectedness during this time of uncertainty. It

may appear silly to call someone by phone when their office is right next to yours, but get comfortable with it. Not just for ENGAGE, but for any conversation where it is not essential to be together.

For those who are able to work remotely, this is the first time they have worked away from the office. Here are some helpful resources from MOLearning to help you create a productive remote work environment, optimize your schedule for peak productivity and show up the way you want to on video conference calls:

- Time Management: Working From Home – 1 hr 25 min
- Productivity Tips: Finding Your Productive Mindset – 59 min

If you are a supervisor, assign a MOLearning course session and ask your team member to make a video that applies the lessons specifically to his or her work and use it as a teaching guide for others on the team. Seek input from the employee about what they learned.

Managing and leading teams under normal circumstances has its challenges. So, how do you lead a team remotely and make sure to keep your people engaged? Learn how to encourage productivity, engagement and boost morale remotely with the following courses:

- Leading at a Distance – 36 min
- Managing Virtual Teams – 56 min
- Leading Virtual Meetings – 32 min

It is crucial that supervisors and team members stay engaged with one another during this time. This is not just about keeping the state government serving our communities as best we can. It is also so teammates can help each other.

COVID-19 is a catalyst for thinking and learning to do better. While we all must care for ourselves and our loved ones, we must all care for one another as well. We are one team. We have one mission. We are one Missouri.

Sincerely,

Randall Williams, MD, FACOG

Director, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)