



Working arrangements during COVID-19

June 24, 2020



GOVERNMENT OF YUKON HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTIVES IN RELATION TO COVID-19

Title: COVID-19 Directive 5 – Working Arrangements During COVID-19 - Issued by the Executive Committee pursuant to COVID-19 Directive 1

Effective: June 24, 2020

Note: This Directive replaces COVID-19 Work from Home Directive 2.

COVID-19 Directive 5 should be read in conjunction with GAM 3.12 Telework policy but **not** the accompanying Telework Guidelines. GAM 3.12 applies to persons who have a minimum of one year of service in their current position: that provision does **not** apply for the purposes of this Directive. Section 3 of GAM 3.12 also does **not** apply under this Directive.

1. Purpose

The goal of this Directive:

- a) to provide guidance as departments continue to plan and implement a gradual return of employees to the workplace in-line with ‘A Path Forward: Yukon’s plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions’; and
- b) to provide guidance for departments who continue to have employees working from home, in some capacity, throughout the next phases of Yukon’s plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions.

2. Application

This Directive applies to all employees hired under the *Public Service Act* and *Education Act*. There are specific health and safety guidelines for public school settings, and school operational planning requirements and considerations for school-based staff (teachers, educational assistants, principals, etc.) that supplement this Directive.

3. Background

On March 18, 2020 the Executive Committee issued a Work from Home Directive with the intent to have as many employees as possible, taking into account operational requirements, work from home in order to increase physical distancing and aid in the prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

Phase 1 of ‘A Path Forward: Yukon’s plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions’ began on May 15, 2020.

With that announcement, Phase 1 of Yukon government’s gradual return to the workplace commenced. While most employees working from home continued to do so, departments began to return employees to the workplace where public facing services, or services to other departments, were not being delivered or had been significantly interrupted.

Phase 2 of Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions is anticipated to begin July 1, 2020, with Phase 3 anticipated to commence a few weeks after, subject to public health considerations associated with COVID-19.

In line with Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions and the gradual re-opening that is unfolding across the territory, the Executive Committee has rescinded the COVID-19 Work from Home Directive 2 and replaced it with this Directive.

The Government of Yukon will continue to implement a gradual, measured approach to returning Yukon government employees who have been working from home, back to the workplace in accordance with this Directive while at the same time supporting continued work from home arrangements in some cases.

4. Operating Assumptions

- a) COVID-19 will remain a public health risk until a vaccine or effective treatments are broadly available, and this could be many months away.
- b) Our 'new normal' may last for many months, so we will need to adapt, adjust and learn to live with the risk of COVID-19.
- c) We may need to return to a previous phase at any time, with more employees working from home, if there is a resurgence or second wave of COVID-19.
- d) During Phases 2 and 3, depending on public health considerations, school operations and childcare options may present challenges for some Yukon government employees to return fully to the workplace.
- e) Requests to work from home either fully or partially, will be considered by Government of Yukon on an ongoing basis as a flexible work arrangement, for positions well suited to such arrangements and where operational considerations permit.

5. Guiding Principles

The following overarching principles will guide the Yukon government's approach under this Directive:

- a) The health and safety of employees and all Yukoners is the top priority.
- b) The Government of Yukon must implement and continue to demonstrate a high standard of health and safety practices in all of our workplaces, at all times.
- c) Departments, workplaces and individual employees across the organization may have unique circumstances to consider, so a flexible approach to returning employees to the workplace is required.

6. Health and Safety Requirements

Prior to returning any employees to the workplace under this Directive, the following health and safety measures must be implemented:

- a) Deputy Ministers must ensure all workplaces within their departments complete and record a COVID-19 workplace assessment that considers space planning, cleaning, and employee health and safety. [The Gradual Return to the Workplace COVID-19 Workplace](#)

[Assessment tool](#) developed by the Public Service Commission may be used for the assessment, or, if another tool is used, it should be cross-referenced with the Public Service Commission tool to ensure all matters have been considered and addressed.

- b) In accordance with the outcome of the workplace assessment, supervisors must ensure any identified hazards are mitigated, including:
 - i. physical workplaces are set up in a manner that enables appropriate physical distancing at all times;
 - ii. numbers of people present at any given time in the workplace must be managed to ensure appropriate physical distancing can be maintained;
 - iii. a schedule for regular cleaning of communal spaces in the workplace is developed and implemented;
 - iv. all required [signage](#) is posted and clearly visible throughout the workplace;
 - v. required hygiene practices are in place and regularly communicated;
 - vi. cleaning and disinfecting products are available to staff, with procedures and schedules readily available for cleaning the workplace;
 - vii. resources to support employee psychological health and safety are regularly communicated to employees; and
 - viii. before any employee return to the workplace, employees are informed of the requirement to stay home when sick and follow [additional measures outlined by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health](#), including any requirement to self-isolate (and not attend work) after travel.
- c) Supervisors must review and communicate to their employees resource material to assist with [space planning](#) and [cleaning of workplaces](#).
- d) Supervisors may seek support from the Public Service Commission at safety@gov.yk.ca, as well as from their own departmental health and safety representatives, to assist with setting up their workplaces safely.
- e) Employees may choose to wear facemasks (unless medical grade masks are a requirement of the job) in any Yukon government workplace. Supervisors must communicate to employees that wearing a mask is not a replacement for physical distancing measures and proven hygiene actions.

7. Considerations for Departments when Planning Employee Return to the Workplace

- a) In the weeks ahead, the intent is a gradual and measured return of employees to the workplace.
- b) Returning employees in a gradual way will:
 - i. ensure adequate time to implement all required physical distancing, cleaning and health and safety measures in workplaces;
 - ii. allow time to embed the health and safety behaviours that each employee must follow for the foreseeable future, into our workplace culture; and
 - iii. facilitate the adjustments all employees will face, both those who have been working from home and those who have been working in the workplace.
- c) While there is much variation across Yukon government departments and workplaces, and flexibility is necessary, if the above health and safety requirements are met including

physical distancing measures, departments should consider the following in determining which employees return to the workplace:

- i. operational objectives;
 - ii. whether work can be performed effectively in full or part from home;
 - iii. suitability of workspace at home;
 - iv. psychological health and safety of employees;
 - v. childcare availability, status of schools and associated employee personal circumstances;
 - vi. internet connectivity;
 - vii. access to equipment or files required to fulfill duties; and
 - viii. employee's personal health considerations.
- d) When planning and implementing a gradual return of employees to the workplace, supervisors should consider:
- i. minimum number of employees required to be present at any one time to meet operational objectives;
 - ii. flexible start and end times to limit number of employees in office at any given time, and reduce traffic in common areas;
 - iii. employees working some combination of at home and in workplace, on a rotational basis, to limit the number of employees in the office at any given time; and
 - iv. continued work from home arrangements for employees whose positions are well suited to working from home.
- e) Supervisors must ensure employees are aware of and follow the guidelines on [returning IT equipment to the workplace](#).
- f) Meetings should continue to be held [virtually](#) or via-teleconference, as the preferred method for meeting. However, there is some flexibility for small groups of people to meet in person, provided physical distancing requirements and other public health measures are strictly adhered to.
- g) Any decision to return an employee to the workplace must be authorized by the Deputy Minister (or delegate) of the employee's department.

8. Considerations for Continued Work from Home Arrangements

- a) The gradual return of employees to the workplace will see the ongoing resumption of services to Yukoners and an enhanced ability for work units to achieve operational objectives across the Government of Yukon, in accordance with department's business continuity plans, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b) Despite 8.a), continued work from home arrangements for employees whose positions are well suited to working from home should be considered.
- c) This Directive is an interim measure to support ongoing work from home arrangements during the pandemic, and until such time that a revised, long-term work from home policy is implemented.
- d) Not only is working from home an important measure to support continued physical distancing, in some situations it can also:
 - i. support an enhanced work/life balance;

- ii. reduce vehicle commuting time and the need for additional office space, which can reduce carbon emissions;
 - iii. serve as a recruitment and retention tool for the organization; and
 - iv. increase employee productivity.
- e) If a supervisor determines that an employee will continue to work from home, either full or part-time, a supervisor must:
- i. review and discuss the [Working from Home Safe Work Practice](#) with the employee;
 - ii. ensure the employee completes the [Work at Home Health and Safety Checklist](#) and any identified hazards are mitigated;
 - iii. provide department human resources with appropriate details of the work from home arrangement for tracking purposes;
 - iv. establish appropriate performance management protocols with the employee to ensure accountability and ongoing delivery of job related outcomes;
 - v. ensure the employee is aware of and abides by Yukon government's [guidance for protecting information while working remotely](#); and
 - vi. ensure the employee has access to the tools and technology required to perform their role in accordance with the [Working from Home Safe Work Practice](#).
- f) Supervisors are encouraged to contact the Public Service Commission's Organizational Development Branch for resources and tools on managing remote teams.

9. Employee Responsibility

We all have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of our workplaces. For greater clarity, all employees are expected to follow the [6 steps to staying safe](#), which includes:

- i. implementing physical distancing;
- ii. staying home when sick; and
- iii. not returning to the workplace if required to self-isolate following travel or other reasons as determined by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

10. Deputy Minister Responsibility

Under this Directive, Deputy Ministers are responsible for the following:

- a) ensuring appropriate health and safety measures are implemented in all workplaces within their department;
- b) communicating the contents of this Directive widely within their department;
- c) responding to concerns and taking additional steps as necessary to ensure the ongoing health and safety of employees in all workplaces within their department; and
- d) ensuring all work from home arrangements are tracked, with regular status updates provided to the Public Service Commission.