

<b>HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS</b>  <b>PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL</b>	Procedure:	EPQLP.1
	Page:	1 of 2
	Date Authorized:	09/20/2022
	Supersedes:	N/A

## EMPLOYEE PAID QUARANTINE LEAVE POLICY

### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the intent of Hidalgo County (the “County”) to provide a safe environment around potential hazards. The County’s first responders protect and serve the community, but can suffer loss of compensation or benefits when they are ordered to quarantine or isolate due to exposure of a communicable disease while on duty. This policy establishes guidelines pursuant to Texas Local Government Code Section 180.008, and in accordance with Texas House Bill 2073 of the 87th Regular Legislative Session.

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide paid quarantine leave and to maintain employment benefits for detention officers, certified emergency medical technicians, firefighters and peace officers who are ordered to quarantine or isolate due to a possible or known exposure to a communicable disease while on duty.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** – the United States health protection agency. The CDC is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services tasked with the investigation and control of contagious disease in the nation.
- B. **Communicable Disease** – means illnesses due to infectious agents or their toxic products, which may be transmitted from a reservoir to a susceptible host either directly as from an infected person or animal or indirectly through the agency of an intermediate plant or animal host, vector, or the inanimate environment.
- C. **Detention Officer** – means an individual appointed or employed by the County as a county jailer or an individual responsible for the care and custody of individuals incarcerated in a County jail.

- D. **Emergency Medical Technician** – means an individual who is employed by the County and certified as an emergency medical technician under Chapter 773, Health and Safety Code.
- E. **Employee** – refers to a detention officer, emergency medical technician, firefighter, or peace officer as defined in this section.
- F. **Firefighter** – means a paid employee of the County who holds a position that requires substantial knowledge of firefighting; has met the requirements for certification by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection under Chapter 419, Government Code; and performs a function listed in Section 143.003(4)(A) of the Texas Local Government Code and who is elected for, employed by, or appointed by the County.
- G. **Health Authority** – means a physician appointed under the provisions of Section 121.021, Health and Safety Code, to administer state and local laws relating to public health within the County’s jurisdiction.
- H. **Peace Officer** - means an individual described by Article 2.12, Code of Criminal Procedure, who is elected for, employed by, or appointed by the County.

#### 4. **GUIDELINES**

##### A. **Requirements for Paid Quarantine Leave Benefits**

1. An employee’s Supervisor, Department Head/Elected Official, or the County’s Health Director shall determine if the employee is required to quarantine or isolate up to five (5) days due to a possible or known exposure to a communicable disease while on duty.
2. Off duty exposures will not be covered under this policy.

##### B. **No Reduction in Compensation and Benefits**

Employees taking quarantine leave in accordance with this policy shall continue to be eligible for all employment benefits and compensation, including leave accrual, pension benefits, and health plan benefits for the duration of the leave. While on quarantine leave, the employee will not be required to use any other accrued paid leave balance, including sick, annual or holiday leave.

**C. Confidentiality of Request**

Any request for quarantine leave shall be treated as strictly confidential by all parties involved and shall be discussed only as necessary to facilitate the use of the leave. Any breach of this confidentiality shall be grounds for discipline.

**D. Reimbursement for Expenses**

1. Eligible employees who are ordered to quarantine may be eligible for reimbursement for reasonable costs related to the quarantine, including lodging, medical, and transportation. Employees must provide accurate and timely receipts for reimbursement to their Supervisor, or Department Head/Elected Official within five (5) days of their release to return to work.
2. The County may deny reimbursement for expenses that are unreasonable or unrelated to quarantine leave.

**5. CLOSING STATEMENT**

The County shall follow the guidance of the CDC and the County's Health Authority in relation to communicable diseases, including when the presence of communicable diseases poses a risk to health and safety. Any questions or clarification that is required pertaining to this policy should be directed to the Department of Human Resources.