



# HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

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Voice/Relay

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TO: Howard County Employees

FROM: Lonnie R. Robbins  
Chief Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: Reopening Guidance

DATE: May 17, 2021

**This communication was sent via global email to all Howard County employees on Monday, May 17, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.**

Dear Employees:

Thank you for your dedication and continued service throughout the past year. I am extremely proud of how we have responded to this pandemic over the past fourteen months with flexibility, and patience while maintaining excellence in our day-to-day operations and service to the residents, businesses, and visitors to Howard County. It is a testament to your dedication that Howard County Government has been operating at such a high level. Since the Governor has eased certain restrictions for State businesses and residents, at this time, we are preparing to return additional staff to our on-site locations and to fully reopen our buildings to the general public. Our COVID-19 metrics are increasingly encouraging. Our positivity rate has remained consistently under 2%, our case rate remains below 5 cases per 100,000, and our hospitalizations are at all-time lows. More than 75% of our residents age 16 and older have received their first vaccine dose and over 61% are fully vaccinated. We offered multiple vaccination opportunities to all County employees and continue to work with the Health Department and the State of Maryland to expand opportunities for residents to be vaccinated.

On Friday May 14, 2021, the Governor limited the requirement to wear a face covering to public transportation, health care settings and schools. The County Executive extended the same easing of restrictions throughout Howard County. Businesses may still require face coverings; however, as of today, we are lifting the requirement to wear face coverings in Howard County facilities. Employees who are not yet vaccinated are advised by the Center for Disease Control to wear face coverings until they are fully vaccinated. Public Safety Departments may adopt stricter restrictions at the direction of each Department's appointing authority. We will continue to limit the elevators to two people and will maintain the posted occupancy limits in common areas.

### **Here are key benchmarks and dates for our transition:**

- **Returning Additional Staff On-site:** Beginning June 21, 2021, Departments and Offices are to begin returning additional staff back on-site. Department heads and Office Administrators should work with their employees to increase on-site staffing levels to 50% capacity. Departments and Office Administrators should be mindful of the challenges that may still exist for our employees, including the need to care for younger children or older adults. Employees may need additional time to arrange child care or summer programs as more opportunities become

available. Employees should be brought back gradually and staggered to keep occupancy levels in line with current restrictions.

The Office of Human Resources will be sharing a new revised telework agreement for employees who work in positions that are suitable for telework during the week. If you are interested in a telework agreement, please work with your supervisor to determine a suitable remote work agreement.

- **100% Staff On-site:** By July 6, 2021, I am asking that 100% of our staff are back working on-site and that any employee who has an opportunity to work remotely have an approved telework agreement under the revised policy. Employees whose jobs do not lend themselves to a remote work arrangement should be back in the office full time by this date.
- **Visitors On-site by Appointment:** On July 13, 2021, we will begin allowing residents and visitors into our buildings by appointment only. Departments should update their websites and phone messages to instruct residents how to schedule appointments. The Bureau of Facilities is working to add a visitor management system in our buildings. Departments that will expect residents and visitors should work with Facilities to help manage the flow of appointments in our buildings.
- **Full Reopening:** On Monday August 2, we will fully reopen all our buildings and services. We will continue to monitor the metrics, Centers for Disease Control guidance, and all State and Local restrictions. We may adjust these timelines in response to changing metrics or guidance.

Thank you again for all your dedication and hard work throughout this pandemic. With your help, I look forward to returning our employees and the general public to our buildings in a safe and efficient manner.

If you have any questions, please contact your appointing authority or John Peterson at [jpeterson@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:jpeterson@howardcountymd.gov).

Sincerely,

Lonnie R. Robbins  
Chief Administrative Officer  
410-313-2171

