

Frequently Asked Questions on NYCHA's Return to Office Plan

Communications

1. **Where can employees learn about COVID-19 office guidelines, new protocols, and measures implemented at each office building, prior to returning to their offices?**

Employees can learn about COVID-19 office guidelines and information regarding return to work policies at <http://connect/RTO/>.

2. **How often will NYCHA update all staff on COVID-19 office guidelines, protocols, and safety?**

NYCHA will continue to send all employees regular emails about COVID-19 safety and return to work policies, from the Offices of the Chair and General Manager, as well as from the Human Resources (HR) and Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Departments. NYCHA will also continue to post these updates at development locations. During an emergency, NYCHA uses Everbridge communications to send all employees text messages, robocalls to personal and work cell phones, and emails to personal and work email addresses.

Employee Information

3. **Why do central office staff members have to return to the office, including staff who perform business operations functions?**

As stated in January by Mayor de Blasio, members of the New York City municipal workforce who have been working remotely since Governor Cuomo's March 2020 declaration will be required to return to the office on a regular and periodic basis as of May 3, 2021.

Returning to the office is an important step towards NYC's overall recovery from the pandemic.

4. **Will employees be required to get vaccinated before returning to the office?**

No, the City of New York does not require City employees to be vaccinated prior to returning to work. Although NYCHA is not a Mayoral agency, NYCHA follows all New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) COVID-19 guidance. DOHMH recommends that all New Yorkers get vaccinated to protect themselves against COVID-19, and continue to observe safe practices such as maintaining social distance and wearing two face coverings to prevent the spread of the virus.

5. Will employees who are not vaccinated be required to get tested for COVID-19 on a regular basis?

No, employees who are not vaccinated will not be required to be regularly tested for COVID-19. Employees should follow DOHMH COVID-19 recommendations on when a COVID test is appropriate: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-testing.page>.

6. Will staff be notified if a co-worker who has returned to the office tests positive for COVID-19?

If NYCHA is notified that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, employees who have been in close contact will be notified. In addition, EHS will work with the employee's supervisor to identify colleagues who may have been in close contact with the employee so their information can be relayed to the NYC Test & Trace Corps.

7. If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, will the impacted office be closed? Will employees have the option to resume working from home full-time?

No, the impacted office will not be closed. NYCHA will follow New York State (NYS) guidelines and arrange for the cleaning and disinfecting of the employee's work area and, if necessary, nearby workstations and other areas in the office the employee may have visited.

8. If an employee has a family member (or comes in contact with a person) who has tested positive for COVID-19, will they be required to work from home?

If an employee is advised by the DOHMH or another public health authority to quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure, that employee will be allowed to work from home if their duties can be performed remotely. Otherwise, NYCHA's leave policy will apply.

9. Will employees who feel uncomfortable or unsafe returning to work have the option to remain working from home?

All employees will be expected to report to the office on their assigned schedule. Absent a reasonable accommodation, no employee will be permitted to remain on a 100% remote work schedule and will need to use accrued annual leave or seek anticipated leave should the employee wish to remain out of the office on his/her scheduled in-office work days. Employees who believe they are eligible for a reasonable accommodation based on their own underlying health condition, disability, or pregnancy should submit a completed Request for a Reasonable Accommodation (RAR) form (NYCHA Form 015.208).

10. How will NYCHA accommodate employees with underlying health issues?

Employees who believe they are eligible for a reasonable accommodation should submit a completed Request for a Reasonable Accommodation (RAR) form (NYCHA Form 015.208).

11. Will employees who are concerned about travelling on public transportation be allowed to continue working from home?

Employees who believe they are eligible for a reasonable accommodation based on their own underlying health condition should submit a completed Request for a Reasonable Accommodation (RAR) form (NYCHA Form 015.208).

Employee Schedules

12. Will each individual department be able to set up their own rules regarding returning to the office?

Maximum occupancy of a workspace will be guided by Federal, NYS, or local guidance. Currently, pursuant to the NYS guidelines, NYCHA is not permitted to have more than 50% of the authorized building occupancy. Therefore, NYCHA departments must work together to determine the number of employees who are permitted in the workspace on a given day. All departments will be instructing employees currently working remotely to return to their work locations one week out of every four weeks beginning the week of May 3, 2021. Individual schedules will be determined by department supervisors based on building capacity, ability to maintain adequate social distance, and specific tasks.

13. Will employees be able to choose which days they wish to come into the office?

Each department will be required to determine the reporting days for staff, based on several criteria, including physical work location and specific tasks. As such, an employee is not able to determine the days he or she wishes to come into the office. If an employee has a specific concern, it is recommended that he or she speak directly with his or her Director.

14. Will employees be required to work a full week or staggered days?

Employees who are instructed to report to central office work locations will be advised of their reporting days, which initially will be for five consecutive days, every four weeks (one week in the office, three weeks at home, then one week in the office, etc.). Additionally, reporting times may be anywhere within the existing Flex-Time reporting band, 8 AM – 10 AM, subject to supervisor's discretion to avoid elevator crowding and transit rush hours.

15. Will the efficiency/functionality of each department be a factor in the amount of days staff will have to report to office?

All central office employees who have been working remotely will be required to report to work locations one week out of every four beginning the week of May 3, 2021. Each department will be required to determine whether there are any additional reporting days for staff, based on several criteria, including how work is performed/assigned and whether certain tasks must be performed in the office.

16. Will employees be allowed to enter the building where they work earlier than their scheduled shift? Will they be allowed to stay later if their supervisor or work requires it?

Employees are expected to report to the office as close to their scheduled start times as possible. Start times (between 8 AM and 10 AM) will be determined in a manner to reduce lobby and elevator congestion. Consistent with existing time and leave policies, employees shall not remain on NYCHA premises nor perform any work before or after their scheduled work hours or on a scheduled day off unless expressly authorized to do so by a supervisor. All overtime requires prior supervisory approval.

Family and Childcare

17. Can parents/caregivers with children in hybrid or remote school schedules, or whose children attend school out of state, apply for a reasonable accommodation?

No. As a reminder, employees are only eligible to apply for a reasonable accommodation based on their own health condition, disability, pregnancy, or childbirth. Caregiver responsibilities are not a qualifying reason for a reasonable accommodation.

18. Will NYCHA allow for flexible schedules for parents/caregivers of children in hybrid or remote school schedules, or whose children attend school out of state? Additionally, will NYCHA allow for flexible schedules for parents/caregivers with other childcare issues?

As stated in January by Mayor de Blasio, members of the New York City municipal workforce, including all central office employees who have been working remotely since March 2020, are required to report to work beginning the week of May 3, 2021. NYCHA, like all municipal employers, does not adjust schedules due to childcare issues; however, employees who are unable to report to work or who need a flexible schedule due to their children being in hybrid or remote school schedules, or with other caregiver responsibilities, may:

- If you are a managerial: Use flex-time during your in-office week, as approved by your supervisor.
- If you are a non-managerial: Use comp time during your in-office week, as approved by your supervisor.
- Use accrued annual leave or seek anticipated leave for your scheduled in-office work days, as approved by your supervisor and permitted by NYCHA policy.

19. Will I be allowed to continue teleworking during my in-office week if my child is advised to quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure at school or daycare?

Because cohorts are based on 25% occupancy, floor seating plans, and work station locations, employees will not be allowed to switch their cohort schedules. An employee may use accrued annual leave or seek anticipated leave for scheduled in-office work days, as approved by your supervisor and permitted by NYCHA policy.

20. Can an employee use or change their lunch hour to pick their children up from school?

Employees are expected to be present at the work site during their scheduled work hours. Employees may use their meal periods for personal business, but should remain aware of the additional time it may take to re-enter the building after leaving.

Office Guidelines

21. How will COVID-19 office guidelines be monitored?

NYCHA's EHS Department is responsible for monitoring compliance with COVID-19 office guidelines.

22. How can employees report violations and violators of COVID-19 office guidelines?

Employees can report violations and violators of COVID-19 office guidelines through NYCHA's Complaint Portal at on.nyc.gov/Submit-Concern.

23. Will employees be required to wear masks all day while in the office?

Yes. All employees will be required to wear a face mask, regardless of the ability to maintain physical distancing, all day in every area of the building and workspace. This applies to employees with offices and those who work in other isolated and enclosed spaces. Employees who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering can request a reasonable accommodation.

Consistent with DOHMH guidance and Mayoral Executive orders, NYCHA will provide all central office employees two reusable cloth facial coverings. If needed, disposable facial coverings will be available for employees to use. However, employees are strongly encouraged to use the reusable cloth facial coverings provided, or to use their own facial covering (provided the facial covering meets the appropriate standards).

24. Will employees be required to remain in their assigned territory and restricted from walking around the office?

No. However, employees must maintain at least six feet of physical distance while walking through the workspace. To facilitate social distancing, directional markings on the walls and floors on every floor will guide one-way foot traffic throughout the office floor and reduce instances of people passing each other.

25. How will people sitting in cubicles in close proximity be separated?

NYCHA will provide each department with a seating plan that allows for appropriate physical distancing while personnel are seated at a workstation. Department Directors can adjust their seating plans provided they allow for six feet of social distancing.

26. Has NYCHA installed plexiglass partitions?

Yes, NYCHA has installed plexiglass partitions at the Walk-in Centers' teller windows, the reception desks, security desks, and conference rooms.

27. Can employees use their own cleaning products to sanitize their space throughout the day?

Employees may use their own cleaning supplies for their workspace (however, NYCHA will not reimburse employees for their cleaning supplies). NYCHA will also provide cleaning supplies for shared spaces so that employees can clean these spaces in between uses.

28. Will employees be allowed to use the pantries, conference rooms, and other common spaces?

Use of pantries and conference rooms will be severely limited with defined occupancy limits posted at each. Department Directors will stagger lunch hours to maintain social distancing.

In-person meetings are prohibited to the extent possible and will be replaced by virtual meetings. Webcams and headsets will be provided to all employees who have a NYCHA-issued desktop computer so that they can attend meetings without leaving their workstations.

29. How many employees will be allowed in the bathroom at one time?

Employees should follow the occupancy signs that are posted outside of each restroom.

30. Will hand sanitizer stations be set up outside the bathroom for use before entering?

Sanitizing dispensers have been installed at or near high-touch areas throughout the building on every floor.

31. How will the bathrooms be sanitized and how often will they be cleaned?

NYCHA has implemented enhanced cleaning and sanitizing in all office areas, including bathrooms, using disinfectants approved by the Centers for Disease Control.

32. How often will each building, floor (including walls and windows), and individual work space be cleaned?

NYCHA has implemented enhanced cleaning and sanitizing in all office areas using disinfectants approved by the Centers for Disease Control. High-touch points, like door handles and elevator buttons, are sanitized several times throughout the day. Workstation surfaces, including keyboards and desktops, are sanitized nightly. Employees must leave these surfaces clear to accommodate the nightly sanitizing.

33. Can employees request to change their office location?

Office locations are not able to be modified. However, employees who are eligible for transfers through the Automated Transfer List System (ATLS) should submit an ATLS request, when the ATLS filing period is open. All employees are encouraged to apply to posted vacancies for positions for which they are interested and believe they are eligible.

Building Protocols

34. Will the 50% ratio of employees in the office be calculated on NYCHA as a whole, based on each department, or based on the number of occupants in the building?

The 50% ratio of employees is based on the maximum occupancy of the given floor as set forth in the building's certificate of occupancy.

35. Will the building owners provide NYCHA employees with complete details of COVID-19 improvements to ensure everyone's safety?

Building owners are not providing NYCHA employees with direct information regarding COVID-19 improvements, outside of signage in common areas, if any. NYCHA's landlords have advised that they are in compliance with all governing authorities' guidelines. As allowable under our leases, NYCHA will require ongoing verification through physical inspection and review of cleaning and air filtration logs.

36. What is the procedure for entering the building?

As required by NYS, all central office employees and visitors will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms before entering the workplace each day. Employees can access the daily screening online through any device that has internet by visiting on.nyc.gov/nycha-emp-health-screening or by downloading the Now® App via the Apple Store or Google Play. NYCHA mobile devices should already have the app installed. This daily screening will be done through an online survey, based on guidance issued by DOHMH, and it will ask employees to answer questions related to common COVID-19 symptoms. Employees should complete the survey online before arriving to their work site; security staff will assist visitors with the screening. Employees and visitors will receive clearance to enter the workspace for that day depending on the answers provided. NYCHA's Office of Safety and Security and EHS will monitor compliance with this requirement.

Building entrance lobbies have wall signage and floor markings instructing people where to walk, and in which direction. This is to maintain distancing and reduce instances of people passing each other. Employees will be required to maintain at least six feet of physical distance when entering the building.

37. Will employees be required to have their temperature taken upon entering the building?

No. NYCHA will continue to use the online screening survey, which will ask employees to answer questions related to common COVID-19 symptoms.

38. Is there a health criterion for entering the building?

Employees will receive clearance to enter the workspace for that day depending on the answers provided in the online health survey. Visitors will work with security staff to answer screening questions.

39. Will employees be asked to return home if they are not feeling well or have cold or flu symptoms?

Yes. Employees who are not feeling well or have cold or flu symptoms while in the office will be directed to return home and consult with a doctor, as the symptoms of a cold or flu are similar to the symptoms of COVID-19.

40. How much time will it take to enter the building?

Due to enhanced screening measures, social distancing requirements, and reduced elevator capacity, please allow for additional time to enter the building, swipe in at a KRONOS time clock, and get to your work station.

41. In buildings where there are other tenants besides NYCHA, will all individuals who work, visit, and enter the building count toward the total building occupancy guidelines?

Occupancy is determined on a per floor basis as set in the building's certificate of occupancy. In the case of buildings with tenants on multiple floors, each floor has an occupancy cap and tenants are assigned a sub cap. All of the tenant's occupants count toward the sub cap, including employees and visitors. Each tenant must comply with its own occupancy limit.

42. Will building staff count occupants each day and prevent individuals from entering when the maximum number of occupants is reached?

NYCHA will monitor occupancy each day. It will not be necessary to prevent individuals from entering NYCHA offices because we are capping our occupancy at 25% of our seating capacity, ensuring that, even with visitors, we'll remain safely under the 50% occupancy limit.

43. How many people will be allowed in an elevator at one time?

Elevator occupancy will be reduced. Elevators will indicate the maximum number of people allowed in each elevator cab.

44. Will freight elevators be available to reduce wait times to enter the building?

Freight elevators may be used if needed. Please look for on-site instruction.

45. How often will doors, stairwells, elevators, and other high-touch surfaces in building common areas be sanitized?

Building management has implemented enhanced cleaning and sanitizing using disinfectants approved by the Centers for Disease Control. High-touch points, like door handles and elevator buttons, are sanitized several times throughout the day.

46. Will staff be able to use the stairs during working hours, and to enter and exit the building?

NYCHA's central office locations at Long Island City and 787/803 Atlantic Avenue have stairwells that may be used throughout the day and to avoid extended elevator

wait times. However, staff must monitor their own social distancing in stairwells, as it is not possible to create designated traffic flows.

47. Will there be limits on how many people can use the stairwell at one time?

There will not be limitations set on how many people can use the stairwell at one time. Employees must monitor their own social distancing in stairwells, as it is not possible to create designated traffic flows.

48. Will the air conditioners in NYCHA office buildings be upgraded to meet COVID-19 guidelines?

All central office locations have upgraded their ventilation systems, which includes air conditioning, by installing the highest rated filtration permitted for their individual systems. These systems are being maintained according to industry standards, including periodic filter replacement.

49. Do the air filtration systems in each of NYCHA's office buildings meet COVID-19 guidelines?

All central office locations have upgraded their ventilation systems by installing the highest rated filtration permitted for their individual systems. These systems are being maintained according to industry standards, including periodic filter replacement.

50. For NYCHA buildings with parking lots, will staff have to check in with security guards in both the back and front entrances?

There have been no changes to parking lot rules in response to COVID-19.

51. Some NYCHA buildings share space with outside organizations that treat patients and deal with the public. Will employees have to share entrances, lobby areas, elevators, and common spaces with non-NYCHA groups?

Yes, common spaces – including entrances, lobby areas, and elevators – remain shared with other building tenants.