

A Message from the Department of Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity on COVID-19

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

The City of Saint Paul is dedicated to ensuring a safe working environment for our community and workforce to stay safe and healthy. The City is closely monitoring the outbreak of COVID-19 with our partners – [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](#), [Ramsey County Public Health](#), and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Recently, the City updated its COVID-19 guidance as per Governor Tim Walz's [March 13, 2020 executive order declaring a peacetime state of emergency](#) and [subsequent executive orders](#); and [Mayor Melvin Carter's March 15, 2020 Declaration of a Local Emergency](#). Our department has decided to make the following changes until further notice.

Staffing and Hours

HREEO's key functions are continuing, with staff using virtual tools where possible. HREEO is implementing social distancing with staff, rotating days when individuals are present in the office. Most employees are working remotely. Employees who are sick, need preventive care, or need to care for their family members or manage changes in childcare are being provided flexible and remote scheduling as well as use of vacation, sick leave, comp time, and Earned Sick and Safe Time. If you require service from HREEO, staff is available by phone and email and can also arrange virtual meetings via Skype.

Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST)

In 2017 our City passed the Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST) Ordinance. The ordinance is designed to protect public health and welfare. Under the ordinance, employers with employees working in Saint Paul must provide Earned Sick and Safe Time to their employees. Employees can use ESST for themselves or a family member to cover absences related to:

- Physical or mental illness, injury, or other health condition
- Medical appointments to diagnose, treat, prevent or care for an illness
- Closure of employee's or employee family member's place of business or place of care to limit exposure to an infectious agent

If you have questions about this information or need assistance with interpretation of this law, please visit our [Labor Standards](#) webpage for more information and resources. HREEO has compiled a list of Frequently Asked Questions, included below and available at www.stpaul.gov/ESST. You can also call us at (651)-266-8966 or email laborstandards@stpaul.gov. Please be aware that HREEO cannot give legal advice.

HREEO encourages employers to go above and beyond the requirements of the ordinance where possible to help protect employee and public health and welfare during this pandemic. Some employers are providing emergency paid leave, flexible schedules, and allowing employees to go negative on ESST balances. Thank you to the employers who are voluntarily implementing these additional worker protections during this difficult time.

Please visit Labor Standards Enforcement and Education website for more detailed information. You can also email us at Laborstandards@stpaul.gov or call us at 651-266-8966.

Confronting Stigma

As per [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) public health emergencies, such as an outbreak of COVID-19 can lead to social stigma toward people, places or things. Some residents and businesses have reported experiencing acts of racism and xenophobia because of the myths surrounding COVID-19. Let's counter stigma and discrimination by [learning and sharing facts](#).

Under City of Saint Paul's Legislative Code Chapter 183 our Human Rights Division investigates complaints of discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, age, familial status etc.

If you think you have experienced discrimination or harassment as a result of stigma, please contact our team at 651-266-8966 or email us at hrightscomplaints@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Updates

You can stay updated about developments, planning and prevention of COVID-19 by visiting [City of Saint Paul](#) or [Ramsey County](#) COVID-19 webpage.

Thank you for taking measures to keep your family and our community safe.

Best regards,

Val Jensen
HREEO Director