



# Staff Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 4.9.20

## Staff FAQs Due to COVID-19

### **Will I be paid during this time of closure due to COVID-19?**

The Fargo Board of Education authorized administration to continue to pay all staff their regularly scheduled days or hours during the 2019-2020 school year due to COVID-19 related closure and not require the use of leave during this time. Please keep in mind that the district's essential personnel list is fluid and may change on a daily basis as needed. Employees needing to report to work will be contacted directly by their principal or supervisor with further instructions. All other employees should not report to work.

### **Do I need to enter leave into absence management during this time?**

No. The Board of Education authorized administration to not require the use of leave by Fargo Public Schools staff during this time.

### **What if I need a day off during this closure?**

Although you will not need to enter leave into absence management to take a day off during this time, you should still work with your direct supervisor to be sure your request is approved and that proper staffing can be accomplished.

### **When will I be needed at work?**

During the duration of the closure, administration will continue to determine who is deemed an essential employee. The essential employee list is fluid and may change on a daily basis as needed. Employees needing to report to work will be contacted directly by their principal or supervisor with further instructions. All other employees should not report to work.

### **Are FPS committees still meeting?**

All standing Fargo Public Schools committee meetings are canceled until further notice.

### **I am an hourly employee who wasn't originally scheduled to work on March 19 and 20. Will I be paid for these days?**

No. If there are days that you are normally not scheduled to work, you will not be paid for those days. However, if you were called in to work on those days, such as March 19 and 20, you would be paid for those days.

### **The Fargo Public Schools contracts with The Village Family Service Center to provide employee assistance services. Am I still able to access those services during the closure due to COVID-19?**

Yes. The Village Family Service Center is still available to Fargo Public Schools staff seeking their services. To learn more about what they offer, click on [this link](#), or call their toll free number: 1-800-627-8220.

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# Frequently Asked Questions, cont.

## **I am an insurance eligible employee and have questions on if my plan covers testing for COVID-19 related illness. Where can I get information on that?**

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) has provided the following information to FPS:

### *Coronavirus Testing and Treatment*

- BCBSND will waive any cost-sharing, including co-pays, deductibles and co-insurance for CDC-recommended laboratory testing of COVID-19.
- BCBSND will also waive cost-sharing for an in-network provider office visit, urgent care center and emergency room visit when testing for COVID-19 (waiving cost-shares may be done on a retrospective case-by-case basis).
- Subsequent hospital stays associated with COVID-19 will be covered according to a member's current health benefit plan.

### *Early refills for prescription medications*

- BCBSND has increased access to prescriptions by allowing pharmacies to refill prescriptions earlier than typically allowed. Keep in mind that most plans allow members to fill maintenance medications for up to a 90-day supply through local or mail-order pharmacies.
- BCBSND now allows pharmacies to waive "refill too soon" limits.
- BCBS is working with their pharmacy benefit manager, Prime Therapeutics, to monitor a possible shortage of raw materials for prescription drugs.

### *Online doctor visits*

Since COVID-19 is a communicable disease, BCBSND encourages online doctor visits. Here are two options for members:

- Online video visits through their health care provider
- [BCBSND's online video visit service](#) (Enter Service Code BCBSND)
  - Online video visits are included in many BCBSND health plans. Members may also call the number on the back of their ID card about specific coverage.

### *Access to services outside North Dakota*

If people do travel, keep in mind that BCBSND members are automatically part of the national BlueCard program which gives them access to services in all 50 states and 200 countries. [Visit the BCBSND Find a Doctor page for more information.](#)

For more information regarding COVID-19 from BCBSND, visit [this link](#). You can also call their member services line at 1-844-363-8457.

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## *Frequently Asked Questions, cont.*

**I normally receive a performance evaluation during this time or within the next month. Will I still be receiving that performance evaluation and how will it be conducted?**

Administration is currently working on the performance evaluation process, taking into consideration that many employees are working remotely or not required to report to work at this time. We still expect that performance evaluations will be completed and communicated to all staff.

**I work for Fargo Public Schools, but live in Minnesota. MN Governor Walz has issued a “stay at home” directive for all residents of the State of Minnesota. I’ve been deemed an essential employee at Fargo Public Schools and am required to travel to a physical location in the school district. Am I allowed to travel to that location, given the Governor’s directive?**

Per guidelines from the Governor’s order, school district operations have been deemed essential operations. If you are deemed an essential employee of the district per direction from your supervisor and are required to travel to one of our physical locations, the expectation is that you would fulfill that requirement. A letter will be provided to you that states the necessity of you traveling to one of our physical locations that you can show to authorities, should you be required to do so. If you have any questions regarding your status, please contact your direct supervisor.

**I am an employee that has TFFR as their retirement plan. Due to COVID-19 closures of the district and other offices, am I still able to contact TFFR with questions about my retirement plan?**

*TFFR program operations are fully functional.* The TFFR office is closed to the public and staff are working remotely. Retirement administration functions will primarily be delivered by electronic means through email ([rio@nd.gov](mailto:rio@nd.gov)) or phone (800-952-2970 or 701-328-9885). TFFR continues to administer critical retirement program operations, claims processing, account maintenance, employer reporting, and retiree payroll functions. No in-person member appointments or outreach programs are being scheduled until further notice. Please sign up for TFFR Member Online to view your personal member account information.

*Retiree benefits will be paid as scheduled.* Monthly TFFR retirement benefit payments to almost 9,000 retirees and beneficiaries will go out on April 1, and every month thereafter as promised. Nearly all of TFFR monthly benefit payments are directly deposited into retiree bank accounts. The few paper checks that go out each month will be mailed as scheduled. TFFR will continue to be able to meet its obligation to retirees, despite the economic downturn.

*New retirement claims are being processed.* If you haven’t done so already, teachers and administrators retiring in 2020 should submit your TFFR retirement application and documentation. Please be reminded that TFFR is a defined benefit pension plan which means your benefit is based on a formula defined in state law. Your benefit will be paid to you and/or your beneficiary for life depending on the option you select. It will not be reduced as a result of the market downturn. TFFR continues to process spring 2020 retirement applications. However, if your last date of employment will be different than what you have previously provided, please let TFFR know (email or phone). If processing delays occur, benefits will be paid retroactive to a member’s retirement date.

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## Frequently Asked Questions, cont.

Priority will be given to members who plan to retire this spring; other requests for information will be responded to as time permits.

Please contact TFFR with any questions via email at [rio@nd.gov](mailto:rio@nd.gov) or phone at 800-952-2970.

### **I recently traveled to another state. Do I have to quarantine?**

The state of North Dakota has issued travel quarantine orders for ND citizens. All individuals traveling back to North Dakota from international locations and states in the U.S. that have been classified as having widespread disease by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) must quarantine immediately upon reentry to the state of North Dakota and for a period of 14 days.

For the full travel quarantine orders, including requirements and the states identified with widespread community infection, [click here](#). Also on the state website is a [brief travel questionnaire](#) for those who have recently traveled and [an assessment](#) you can take if you are feeling unwell. *Fargo Public Schools staff and students who have recently traveled should follow these protocols. There will be no professional travel for Fargo Public Schools staff members until further notice.*

Additional information related to travel is available at [this link](#).

### **I've heard of a telehealth program offered through our health plan called Amwell and have a couple of questions. What is Amwell, where can I get more information on it, and does it cover COVID-19 testing?**

Amwell is a telehealth option for all insurance eligible employees participating in the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) health insurance plan. Given the nature of the COVID-19 outbreak, seeking in-person medical care may lead to further spread of the virus. BCBSND encourages the use of telehealth visits, which may include a video, audio phone call, FaceTime, Skype or e-mail "visit" with a healthcare provider. Please understand that there may be longer than normal wait times as more and more people utilize this service. Common conditions for Amwell services include:

- Colds
- Flu
- Fever
- Rash
- Abdominal pain
- Sinusitis
- Pink eye
- Ear infections
- Migraines

**Of note:** There is no cost share for testing for COVID-19. You will not have to pay a deductible or co-pay for this test.

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# Frequently Asked Questions, cont.

When using Amwell, you can schedule a visit by going to [www.amwell.com](http://www.amwell.com). Also, located in Employee Portal/Human Resources/Employment/Benefits, there is an “Amwell Enrollment Tutorial” you can access.

To enroll for the first time, follow these steps:

- You will need your member ID number, located on your BCBSND member card
- You will need the primary subscriber’s name and date of birth
- Enter Service Key: **BCBSND**

## **I have been deemed an essential staff member, but I am unable to work remotely or at one of our physical locations at this time due to a COVID-19 illness in my home. What am I to do?**

Please reference the “Families First Coronavirus Response Act” e-mail sent on March 31 for further guidance or contact the HR Department if you have additional questions. The Human Resources Office will work with you to determine if you are eligible for either provision of the new legislation. Please keep in mind that you must be unable to work both remotely and at one of our physical locations to be eligible for the Emergency Paid Sick Leave or Emergency Family Medical Leave Act Expansion provisions. Don’t worry, this will not impact any of your personal leave balances and you will continue to be paid during your time you are unable to complete your duties remotely or at one of our physical locations.

## **Are we now having “distance learning” on April 10? What about April 13 – is that still a makeup day?**

Friday, April 10 is a no school day and a holiday for all FPS staff members. Distance learning/PLC/Professional Practice will not occur on April 10.

Monday, April 13 is a school makeup day due to the February 12 storm closure. Distance learning will occur on April 13. Staff deemed essential personnel will be required to report for duty, whether that be at one of our physical locations or remotely.

## **On April 7, Governor Burgum issued a suspension of the requirement that a school district conduct a written performance review for every teacher, principal and assistant/associate superintendent employed for more than three years. Written performance reviews will still have to be conducted for those employed for less than three years. Does this mean that teachers that have 3 or more years of experience will not be receiving an evaluation?**

As previously communicated, our expectation will be that all teachers will have a completed performance evaluation but that there would be grace in completing those evaluations by May 31. Even though we still have an expectation of all evaluations being completed, this new requirement suspension will give us further grace in the instance that an evaluation cannot be completed for a teacher with 3 or more years of experience.

*This FAQs document will be updated as needed with additional questions and answers. Please contact the Human Resources Office if you have any questions regarding your schedule or pay.*