

COMMUNICABLE AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES POLICY

Purpose

This policy outlines specific steps that RAILS takes to safeguard employees' health and well-being during widespread outbreaks of infectious bacterial or viral diseases, while ensuring RAILS' ability to maintain essential operations and provide necessary services to the public. RAILS' decisions involving persons who have communicable or infectious diseases shall be based on current and well-informed medical judgments concerning the disease, the risks of transmitting the illness to others, the symptoms and special circumstances of each individual who has a communicable disease, and a careful weighing of the identified risks and the available alternative for responding to an employee with a communicable or infectious disease.

Infectious Disease Defined

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control, *emerging infectious diseases* are new infections resulting from changes or evolution of existing organisms, known infections spreading to new geographic areas or populations, previously unrecognized infections appearing in areas undergoing ecologic transformation, old infections that are reemerging as a result of antimicrobial resistance in known agents, or breakdowns in public health measures. Communicable/infectious diseases include, but are not limited to, measles, influenza, staph infections, Ebola virus, Zika virus, viral hepatitis-A (infectious hepatitis), viral hepatitis-B (serum hepatitis), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV infection), AIDS, AIDS- Related Complex (ARC), , Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), including COVID-19 and tuberculosis. RAILS may choose to broaden this definition within its best interest and in accordance with information received through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and local health departments.

Infectious Control Measures

RAILS will not discriminate against any job applicant or employee based on the individual having a communicable or infectious disease. Applicants and employees shall not be denied access to the workplace solely on the grounds that they have a communicable disease. However, RAILS reserves the right to exclude a person with a communicable disease from the workplace facilities, programs, and functions if the organization finds that, based on a medical determination and known methods of transmission, such restriction is necessary for the welfare of the person who has the communicable disease and/or the welfare of others within the workplace.

RAILS takes a number of steps to minimize, to the extent practicable, exposure to infectious diseases at the workplace. As appropriate, RAILS recommends measures that employees can take to protect themselves outside the workplace and encourages employees to discuss their specific needs with a physician or other appropriate health or wellness professional.

RAILS expects employees who contract an infectious disease or are exposed to infected family members or other persons to stay home and follow the advice of a medical professional. RAILS also expects these employees to notify HR or their supervisor as soon as possible of their exposure or illness.

RAILS approves the installation or use, wherever possible, of improved equipment or cleaning methods to guard against the spread of infection at the workplace.

RAILS-provided training addresses issues such as the availability of vaccines; symptoms, treatment, and appropriate medical care; steps to take if exposure is suspected; proper use of RAILS-provided personal protection equipment; and proper hygiene in the workplace and at home.

Remote Work

RAILS acknowledges that employees' access to and use of public services or transportation might be prohibited or curtailed by local, state, or federal authorities during an infectious disease outbreak. Employees also might be unable to access or leave buildings, and disruptions can occur in the delivery of goods or services. RAILS is prepared to continue key “bare bones” operations from a number of remote work locations, including essential employees' home offices.

Employee Leave and Pay

RAILS grants leave to employees who are absent because of an infectious disease that affects them or their family members. RAILS allows employees to use their accrued annual or sick leave if they become ill or need to take leave to care for a family member. Employees also can use unpaid family and medical leave for their illness or a family member's illness. These employees must notify HR or their supervisor as soon as possible of their need for family and medical leave. RAILS requires employees to take unpaid family and medical leave if they lack accrued annual or sick leave. Remote work may be available for employees with a communicable disease if their position offers the remote work option

Business Travel

RAILS makes all reasonable efforts to reduce the need for travel , for example, by using technology that allows employees to communicate or otherwise work electronically. In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, travel on RAILS’ behalf generally is limited to a select group of essential employees who have the required travel authorization from RAILS, and if necessary, outside authorities.

Compliance and Confidentiality

RAILS will comply with all applicable statutes and regulations that protect the privacy of persons who have a communicable disease. Every effort will be made to ensure procedurally sufficient safeguards to maintain the personal confidence about persons who have communicable diseases.

Additional procedures may be developed as necessary in adherence with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and local health departments.

See also:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Family and Medical Leave of Absence (FMLA)

Sick Leave Policy

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RAILS expects employees who contract an infectious disease or are exposed to infected family members or other persons to stay home and ~~seek medical attention if needed.~~ Follow advice of a medical professional. RAILS also expects these employees to notify HR or their supervisor as soon as possible of their exposure or illness.

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Applicants and employees are encouraged to self-report if they are actively infectious.

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