

Pandemic Leave Policy

POL 44.2021

Version 1/2021

Reference Document/ Relevant Legislation	Section 152, Fijian Constitution 2013 Government of Fiji Gazette, Public Health (Covid-19 Response) Public Notice No. 31-33 Ministry of Health & Medical Services Advisories
Reference Guide	A quick reference guide to common COVID-19 policy responses/ International Labor Office, 2020 Employer Best Practices, Policies to Support Workers During the Coronavirus Pandemic Paid Pandemic Leave Policy, Australian Council of Trade Unions
Commencement Date	10 May 2021
Review Date	Six Month Review

POLICY STATEMENT

1 Intent

The office is following current public health advice in relation to COVID-19. This procedure defines our approach on leave management and working arrangements during the COVID-19 or related pandemic outbreak while following the advice of the Ministry of Health & Medical Services and direction from the Government of Fiji

2 Scope

This procedure applies to all staff with valid service of employment contract for the duration of the Coronavirus pandemic or until otherwise notified

OAG reserves the right to review and amend this policy at any time. Any updates will be notified to all staff.

3 Objective(s)

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Prevent or reduce the risk of potential spread of illness
- Reduce staff intention that feel unwell to come to work during a recognised pandemic period
- Comply with advisories from Ministry of Health & Medical Services & Government of Fiji
- Meet the intent of the restricted movements and the control mechanisms of the outbreak
- Balance the financial impacts of leave in specific circumstances, both to OAG and the staffs
- Ensure essential corporate and backend functions are performed

4 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- To provide appropriate support to staff who are required to or request to stay away from office during a recognised Pandemic when unwell, potentially contagious, or susceptible to illness.
- To manage situations when staff may not have access to work during the COVID-19 alert levels subject to advisories form Ministry of Health & Medical Services and the Government of Fiji

5 Definitions and Acronyms

Policy Maker	Auditor-General
Management	Executive Management Committee

6 Supporting Documents/References

Section 152, Fijian Constitution 2013

Government of Fiji Gazette, Public Health (Covid-19 Response) Public Notice No. 31-33

Ministry of Health & Medical Services Advisories

A quick reference guide to common COVID-19 policy responses/ International Labor Office, 2020

Employer Best Practices, Policies to Support Workers During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Paid Pandemic Leave Policy, Australian Council of Trade Unions

7 Keywords

Pandemic Leave
Work from Home
Office Closure
Isolation/Quarantines
Return to work
Responsibilities

8 Supporting Procedures and Guidelines

The guidelines to this policy are attached as Annexure I to this policy. This information will provide the background to the development of the policy should officers need clarification.

RESPONSIBILITIES	
Implementation	The Supervisors are responsible for implementing the policy.
Compliance	All staff are responsible for complying with the policy
Monitoring and Evaluation	The Supervisors are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the policy.

Implementation & Monitoring Designation	Deputy Auditor General and Assistant Auditor General as responsible for Implementation and Monitoring
Development and/or Review	The Corporate Services division will be responsible for developing and/or reviewing the policy.
Interpretation and Advice	The Deputy Auditor General is responsible for interpreting and advice on the policy.



ANNEXURE I – Guiding Principles

This policy has been written for staff management and is intended to address related questions, support OAG by providing methods to ensure essential corporate and backend functions are performed, and to serve as a guide for staffing during lockdown or containment areas and administering leave measures in the pandemic event

Guiding Principles

- a) The health and wellbeing of our staff is paramount during the containment period of Covid-19
- b) Part of the success of the planning and management during an outbreak relies heavily on communication and flexibility by both staff and the office.
- c) It is important to note that a fine balance needs to be created between recovering any productivity losses and compliance with law relating to the pandemic and keeping staffs safe. If restricted movement /containment period or office closure advice from Ministry of Health & Medical Services for non-essential business is to be extended from 7th May 2021, a pandemic leave is available for all staffs where it can be used upon application with at least 50% of the time will need to be recovered through work after hours in the next six-month period. Time made up can be facilitated through Teammate / timesheets.
- d) Staffs will also have the option to take annual leave or leave without pay with due consideration that following disruption to all services to the government network since 12th April 2021. Staff with excessive leave balance shall utilise annual leave first before applying for pandemic leave.
- e) Additionally, OAG is an independent office and not clearly outlined as essential service under Government of Fiji Gazette dated 26th April 2021, Public Health Act 1935, notice number 32 (3) Any business in a containment zone that is not an essential business must close, with effect from 4 am on 26 April 2021
- f) Moreover, as part of Covid19 Preparedness Strategy, staff can make arrangements to continue to work from home to meet the backend operations of the office. They also can apply for Pandemic leave should their nature of duties cannot be executed from home.
- g) Furthermore majority of the staffs live in containment zones gazetted under Public Health Act 1935, notice number 33 on 26th April and will not be able to pass through checkpoints.
- h) It is understood that a common concern will be the contraction of pandemic by being at work. Thus we will use good health and safety and prevention control practices to ensure that our workplace is a safe place to be once the national advises has been uplifted
- i) During a pandemic the office will have to run essential corporate and backend functions including payroll processing

- j) It is important to note that all staff will be required to adhere to office policies and advisories during the pandemic.



ANNEXURE II – Pandemic Staffing Guide

In no event shall this guide supersede regulations under the Government of Fiji or pandemic advisories from Ministry of Health & Medical Services regarding terms and conditions of employment for which employees are eligible, including Employment Labor laws governing the leave provision during the pandemic

Changes to leave policies in response to a pandemic shall be updated accordingly and communicated with staff with emphasis that these changes apply only during a pandemic.

I. Pandemic Leave

Paid pandemic leave is a critical OAG measure that would provide a circuit breaker to stem the rate of transmission by allowing staff to stay home. This measure is essential pertaining to Government of Fiji Gazette dated 26th April 2021.

Pandemic leave with pay shall be granted for appropriate advisories for the following scenarios:

- Extension of containment area or lockdown notice
- Staff with inadequate leave balance or have utilised adequate leave during the year.
- Staff not accessed to clients office
- Staff with nature of duties cannot be executed from home.
- Staff is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19
- medical confirmation of COVID-19 diagnosis (*subject to utilisation of outpatient/inpatient leaves*) Refer to Annexure II , IV(b)
- satisfactory evidence of a positive test for COVID-19 is provided (*subject to utilisation of outpatient/inpatient leaves*) Refer to Annexure II , IV(c)
- Other external environment factors based on National advise

Again, it is important to note that a fine balance needs to be created between recovering any productivity losses and compliance with law relating to the pandemic and keeping staffs safe. If restricted movement /containment period or office closure advice from Ministry of Health & Medical Services for non-essential business is to be extended from 7th May 2021, a pandemic leave is available for all staffs where it can be used upon application and approval with at least 50% of the time will need to be recovered through work after hours in the next six-month period. Time made up can be facilitated through Teammate / timesheets.

When granted pandemic leave with pay, staff will be expected to comply with any directives which may be given by the office and to take all practical steps to resume duty as soon as practicable. Non-compliance with this may result in disciplinary action

Staff must note that there are 2 levels of endorsement for pandemic leave.

- Consideration by supervisors
- Decision by Deputy Auditor General or Assistant Auditor General

II. Operational Matters

a) What happens if I get asked to work in a different way to what I normally do?

Through planning we have identified that work needs to be carried out differently. As this is a viable option, regular virtual meetings will be scheduled to consider pandemic situation from time to time especially to those with working from home

b) Will my terms and conditions of employment change?

All terms and conditions of employment will essentially remain the same, however flexibility may be required with regard to the nature of tasks and duties to complete, hours and location of work.

Depending on the scenario that the pandemic presents, for staff on work from home arrangements must work flexibly during the pandemic with no alternate allowance

c) Can OAG require me to stay at home?

Yes, under the Government of Fiji Gazette dated 26th April 2021, Public Health Act 1935, notice number 32, 33, the office has an obligation to make the work place safe for their staff. This may require staff to stay at home as:

- To allow contact tracing of the potentially exposed or came in contact of infected persons
- manage the potential hazard of contracting the pandemic virus if movements occur

d) Can staff take annual leave during pandemic?

Authorisation for annual leave during this period will be treated as per the office Leave Policy and relevant employment contract. Staff with excessive leave balance shall utilise annual leave first before applying for pandemic leave. If staff have any immediate concerns, please discuss these with your supervisor in the first instance.

Note: Staff will be allowed to carry forward 21 days annual leave due to the current situation.

e) Can I apply for work from home during pandemic?

Work from home applications may be requested, communicated, assigned and/or processed via e-mail. Staff must advise supervisors on work completed through such arrangement on a weekly basis and supervisors may take necessary review of tasks.

Staff must precisely consider the current pandemic environment and the management strategies implemented by office when discussing matters at hand for work completion during the pandemic

Staff working from home will be expected to maintain communication with their supervisors including continuation of regular check-ins via Skype, Zoom or teleconference and day-to-day communications as required.

III. Office closure

Such closures has been anticipated during a pandemic and all staff should have a family care plan in place

IV. Quarantines or Isolations

All staff must not put themselves or others at risk if they are unwell or have developed symptoms associated with or similar to COVID-19. If a staff is subject to quarantine or recommended to isolate based on medical advice the following will apply:

a) Situations when staff quarantine or isolation will apply

- Staff may have been in contact with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 or someone who is showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Staff are showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Staff have been contacted through Care-Fiji App as primary contacts of confirmed case.
- Staff moved to isolation facility because of their individual circumstances pertaining to pandemic

b) Staff under quarantine

- A quarantine is a restriction on the movement of people, which is intended to prevent the spread of disease. It is used to prevent the movement of those who may have been exposed to a disease but who do not have a confirmed medical diagnosis. Quarantine separates people who are well but may have been exposed to the virus to see if they become sick.
- A medical certification upon completing the 14-day quarantine will be provided from the quarantine facility after a staff has completed the mandatory 14 days and has had a negative COVID-19 test result
- Should their quarantine period be extended or where a staff subsequently contracts COVID-19, they must then test negative for COVID-19 before they can go into the community and their respective homes.
- Further on, assuming where the staff does not have adequate in- patient leave, then they can submit application for Pandemic Leave
- Thus pandemic leave with pay will continue for the duration of the illness, subject to medical confirmation with medical certification being provided for clearance purpose

c) Staff Isolation procedure

- Isolation separates sick people with the disease from people who are not sick.
- Staff to directly advise their respective Assistant Auditor Generals in the first instance if they have been moved to isolation ward in accordance with Ministry of Health requirements.
- The Assistant Auditor Generals will alert the Executive Management in order to coordinate and maintain a staff register of people in isolation.
- Staff who have been in isolation, will be required to provide a medical clearance confirming completion of isolation and negative test for COVID-19 and staff is clear to return to work. This will be issued by isolation ward medical practitioners

- As been in isolation ward, staff will be issued with medical certificate upon clearance for their stay in isolation. Thus, assuming where the staff does not have adequate in- patient leave, then they can submit application for Pandemic Leave

To prevent the spread of illness, where one of the above situations applies to a team member and they do not wish to quarantine or self-isolate, OAG reserves the right to formally require the team member to remain away from work for up to 14 days or more with reference to guidelines from Ministry of Health & Medical Services.

Note: For a scenario, if a staff is on Pandemic Leave and later confirmed with COVID-19, the staff proceed on sick leave from the date confirmed by Doctors.

V. Staff unable to come to work for other reasons

The office recognises there may be situations when staffs are unable to come to work for other reasons outside their control

Under such circumstances, the staff and supervisors will be expected to make every effort to consider whether the staff can work from home to ensure their role requirements be accommodated. If this is not feasible, leave must be applied as outlined in Annexure I, Guiding Principles (c) and (d).

VI. Return to Work

It is a reasonable expectation that staff will attend work where practicable steps have been taken to ensure health and safety while at work

VII. Responsibilities

Tabulated below are primary responsibilities with effect from this policy

Designation	Responsibility
Auditor General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granting pandemic leave approval to Executive Management during the applicable scenarios outlined in the policy • The policy is supported by section 152(7) of the Fijian Constitution
Deputy Auditor General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness relating to the policy
Executive Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring staff health and wellbeing • Take all reasonably practical steps to ensure themselves and their teams are adhering to the requirements of this policy • Considering and approving requests for leaves and work from home where appropriate • Distribution of employee communications related to this policy
Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing timely advice to Executive Management and Administrative Assistant Human Resources as required including their group staff status

Admin Assistant Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining staff status update including those on leave, list of people in self-isolation, on pandemic leave and those working from home • Providing timely advice to supervisors and Executive Management required
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are responsible for taking all reasonably practical steps to adhere to the requirements of the policy

VIII. Exclusions

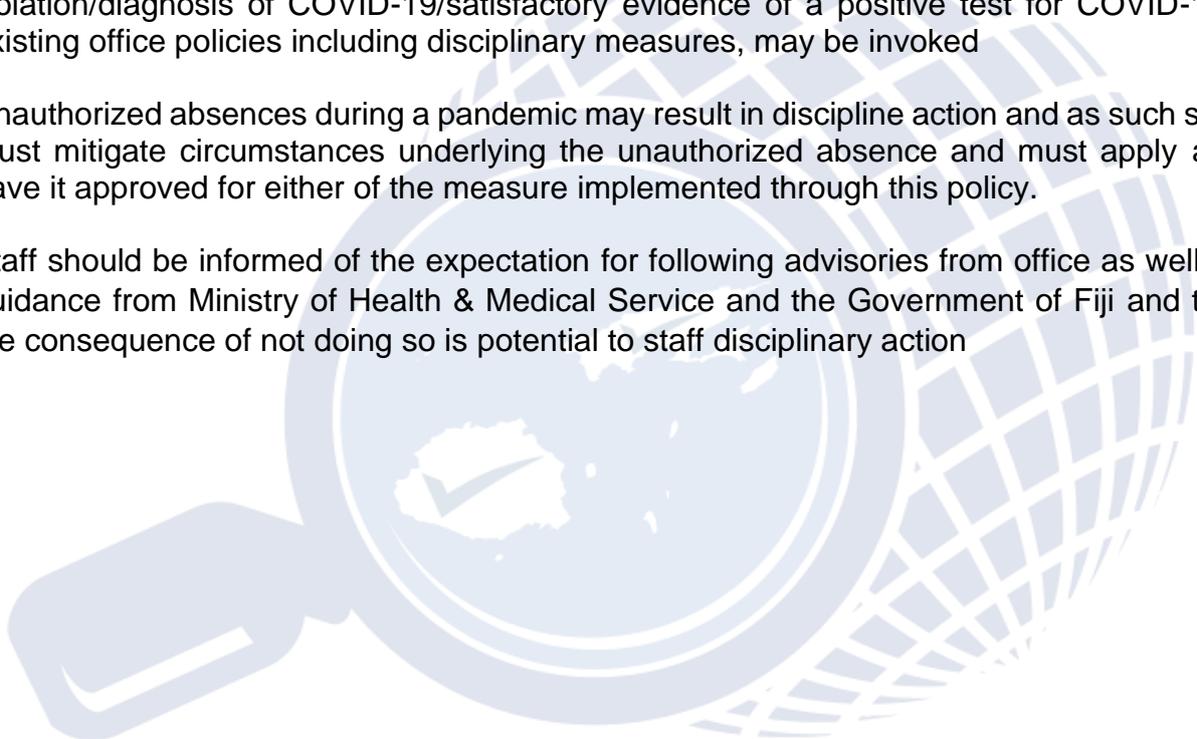
Pandemic Leave shall not be applicable to the Auditor General

IX. Discipline Measures

In the event of non-compliance with the Pandemic Leave Policy and/or the provisions of outlined conditions (including the requirement to provide bona fide confirmation of self-isolation/diagnosis of COVID-19/satisfactory evidence of a positive test for COVID-19), existing office policies including disciplinary measures, may be invoked

Unauthorized absences during a pandemic may result in discipline action and as such staff must mitigate circumstances underlying the unauthorized absence and must apply and have it approved for either of the measure implemented through this policy.

Staff should be informed of the expectation for following advisories from office as well as guidance from Ministry of Health & Medical Service and the Government of Fiji and that the consequence of not doing so is potential to staff disciplinary action



8 Review

This policy will be reviewed in next 6months

9 Who to Contact About this Policy

Any queries is directed to Deputy Auditor General

10 Approval

This policy becomes effective on the date approved by the Executive Management Committee

11 Revision/Change Log

Version 1.0	
Policy endorsed by:	Executive Management Committee
Policy approved by:	Auditor-General
Policy effective from:	10 May 2021
Policy to be reviewed by:	9 November 2021
Policy prepared by:	Talent Management Specialist
Manager responsible for policy:	Deputy Auditor General

Staff Details

Full Name:				EDP / File No.	
Group				Address	
Phone				Email	
Duration of Leave	Start Date		End Date		Available leave balance (days)

The pandemic leave measure is a temporary agreement based on my scenario: *(Please tick as relevant)*

Extension of containment area or lockdown notice

Staff with inadequate leave balance or have utilised adequate leave during the year.

Staff not accessed to clients office

Staff with nature of duties cannot be executed from home.

Staff is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19

Medical confirmation of COVID-19 diagnosis *(subject to utilisation of outpatient/inpatient leaves) Refer to Annexure II , IV(b)*

Satisfactory evidence of a positive test for COVID-19 is provided *(subject to utilisation of outpatient/inpatient leaves) Refer to Annexure II , IV(c)*

Other external environment factors based on national advice

Tentative Work Schedule for next six months

Time made up can be facilitated through Teammate / timesheets.

Work to be done after hours from *(insert time/date/month)* _____, _____, _____ when we resume work as normal.

Staff Acknowledgement

I understand that I am agreeing to apply for pandemic leave at the Office of the Auditor General. If approved, I will adhere to the condition in this policy

If permitted, this arrangement will remain active until cancelled by the office. From time to time, my supervisor may try to contact me regarding my status and I am expected to maintain contact with them. Modifications to this policy are subject to approval by the Auditor General

I further understand and acknowledge that:

- It is my responsibility to adhere to the terms and conditions set forth in office policy and guidelines from Ministry of Health & Medical Service and the Government of Fiji
- This application for pandemic leave is a temporary agreement to keep the community safe. This arrangement may be modified or removed at any time
- Pandemic Leave is approved on the understanding with at least 50% of the time will be required by staff to work through after hours in the next six month period.

Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

Consideration by Supervisors

- Agrees with the pandemic scenario declared by staff
- Request denied at this time

Supervisors Signature _____ Date: _____

Decision by Auditor-General or Deputy Auditor General/Assistant Auditor General

- Request approved as outlined in this document
- Request denied at this time

Signature _____ Date: _____