

# CORE CONNECTION

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER  
FOR LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES



April 8, 2020

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## New LDOE Employee Support Website

Today, we are excited to release our new intranet for LDOE employees. The [LDOE Employee Support Google Site](#) is a newly designed, dedicated space for the most up-to-date information for LDOE staff.

All LDOE employees will receive an email today granting access to the site, which includes information about COVID-19, tools and resources for managing and working remotely, HR resources, as well as guidance from the Office of Technology Services (OTS). In addition to reviewing content found on the [LDOE Employee Support Google Site](#), employees are strongly encouraged to continue reading Core Connection, which includes pertinent information for all state employees.

We hope this new intranet will be a helpful resource for all LDOE employees. For questions regarding the site, please contact [Ariel Bedford](#) and [ldoecommunications@la.gov](mailto:ldoecommunications@la.gov).

# State Holiday Reminder

Friday, April 10th

In observance of Good Friday, **all state agencies will be closed Friday, April 10, 2020** .

## 2020 Teacher Leader Summit

### UPDATE

**In light of ongoing COVID-19 health concerns and at the direction of local and national authorities, the in-person 2020 Teacher Leader Summit will not occur this May, as scheduled.** This was a difficult decision and one we did not take lightly, but the health and safety of educators, presenters, staff, and the community as a whole are paramount. We urge everyone to follow the guidelines and protocols put forth by public health officials.

In keeping with the Department's commitment to supporting educators, the Department will shift to a virtual session presentation platform for as many sessions as possible. A Department staff member will follow up with you over the next two weeks if this applies to your session(s).

All registrants will automatically be unregistered from the event. If individuals paid for a ticket, they will automatically receive a refund, minus processing fees, by the end of April to the card on file. Should individuals need assistance, they can reach out to [LDOEEvents@la.gov](mailto:LDOEEvents@la.gov). Confirmation of the cancellation will be sent to the purchaser's email address.

The Department will cancel all hotel rooming blocks listed in the [Overview Document](#). However, individuals should contact the hotel directly if they require proof of cancellation. Some individuals have chosen to book hotel rooms outside of the Department's block. Those individuals should contact the hotel directly to arrange cancellation of their contracts.

Thank you for your support and patience. If you have any questions regarding Teacher Leader Summit, please contact [LDOEEvents@la.gov](mailto:LDOEEvents@la.gov) for assistance.

## Every Child (and Household) Counts: Census 2020

**Census Day was observed nationwide on April 1st.** By this date, every home should have received an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. **There is still time for your household to respond!**

[How to respond to the 2020 Census :](#)

1. [Online](#)
2. By phone
3. By mail

### **About the Census**

The 2020 Census count impacts the federal funds that communities receive each year for programs and services that are critical for schools, students, and younger children, such as:

- Special education, Head Start, after-school programs, and classroom technology.
- Food assistance, including free and reduced-price school lunches.
- Maternal and child health programs.

Completion of the census **ensures federal funding to support Louisiana students** . In February, [the Department released the 2020 Census Toolbox](#) for school systems and families to communicate the importance of the 2020 Census to their students and children.

[Watch this short video to learn more about the 2020 Census](#) .

To learn more, visit <https://2020census.gov/>.

### **Update Signature Lines**

In addition to completing the 2020 Census, we encourage staff to add the 2020 Census link at the bottom of their email signature starting now through July 2020: <https://2020census.gov/>

## FY20 Year-End Deadlines

The Office of Fiscal Operations, Appropriation Control has set the deadlines noted below to ensure that the Department uses all of its FY20 funding. **Failure to meet these deadlines risks funding availability.** The Department cannot guarantee the payment of late claims and/or late claims might have to wait until the following fiscal year ( June 2021) for funds to be available. We appreciate

late claims and/or late claims might have to wait until the following fiscal year (June 2021) for funds to be available. We appreciate your cooperation and thank you for helping us be good stewards of our funds.

#### Travel Deadlines

<b>June 19</b>	All claims for <b>travel that occurred up to May 31, 2020</b> , due to the Office of Fiscal Operations, Appropriation Control/Travel
<b>June 19</b>	<u>Any June travel to be paid with 8g funds</u> due to the Office of Fiscal Operations, Appropriation Control/Travel
<b>July 6</b>	<u>Any June travel to be paid with TANF or Carl Perkins funds</u> due to the Office of Fiscal Operations, Appropriation Control/Travel
<b>July 10</b>	<u>Any other June travel</u> due to the Office of Fiscal Operations, Appropriation Control/Travel

**Purchasing and Contracts Deadlines** (*before confirming purchase with vendor, ensure that deliver can occur on or before June 30, 2020*)

<b>March 23</b>	Last day to submit Requisitions \$5,000 and over
<b>May 8</b>	Last day to submit Professional Services contracts/amendments

#### P-Card Deadlines\*

<b>May 15</b>	Last day to submit Requisitions \$5,000 and less
<b>May 31</b>	Last day for FY20 P-Card purchases
<b>June 1 - July 9</b>	All P-Cards reduced to \$1.00 spending limit
<b>July 10</b>	P-Cards return to standard limits

\* If there are June events for which a P-Card holder needs an exception, please submit a written request to Natoria Ingram at [natoria.ingram2@la.gov](mailto:natoria.ingram2@la.gov).

#### Invoice Deadlines

<b>June 22</b>	<u>Any invoice to be paid with 8g funds</u> due to the Office of Fiscal Operations, Appropriation Control - Payables Unit
<b>July 6</b>	<u>Any invoice to be paid with TANF or Carl Perkins funds</u> due to the Office of Fiscal Operations, Appropriation Control/Payables Unit
<b>July 15</b>	<u>Any other invoices</u> due to the Office of Fiscal Operations, Appropriation Control/Payables Unit

#### LEA/Subgrantee Claims Deadline

<b>June 22</b>	<b>8g claims</b> due in eGMS
<b>July 6</b>	<b>Carl Perkins claims for June expenses</b> are due in eGMS
<b>July 15</b>	<b>All other state and federal awards (excluding 8g and Carl Perkins) ending June 30, 2020</b> , due in eGMS

## Live Better Louisiana

### April Newsletter

Please click [here](#) to view the April Live Better Louisiana Newsletter for more information from OGB.

#### Working from Home: Tips for Productivity, Mental Health and Staying Healthy

Many state employees are working from home; but while getting your work done is important for business, staying healthy (mentally and physically) is just as crucial for at-home. It is all about creating boundaries between work and personal life, and that can be a difficult adjustment. Here are some tips for telecommuting, working from home, self-isolating or even self-quarantining-no matter your reasoning.

- Maintain Regular Hours.** While working remotely does mean that there is added flexibility with your personal life schedule, it is best to stick to a schedule where you can be productive, get your work done and call it a day when work hours are up.
- Create a Morning Routine.** Whether it is having a cup of coffee every morning, doing some morning stretches or taking your dog on a walk, creating a morning routine can greatly help you get ready for the workday at home.
- Schedule Breaks.** Just like any working environment, giving yourself breaks is incredibly important to let your brain and body relax. Take a 15-minute walk, go make some lunch or catch up with a loved one on the phone-whatever you do, though, do not work yourself to the bone without letting yourself take a break away from screens, meetings and work.
- Leave Home.** Even with the stay at home order, it is still important you get out and take a break from your routine work

space. Your body needs to move, and fresh air and new scenery do your mind a lot of good.

5. **Socialize with Colleagues.** Of course, in the wake of something like the Coronavirus, socializing in-person with others might not be best idea. In general, if you are working from home, socializing is important. Loneliness, disconnection and isolation are common problems in remote work life. Conference calls and virtual meetings give employees the chance to speak to other people while still getting work done. Making sure you nurture relationships, both work and personal, is crucial to mental health-especially when working remotely.

The Office of Group Benefits (OGB) is closely monitoring the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and how it could impact our members. OGB has asked each of the health plan vendors to provide us with their contingency plans regarding care and coverage members may need should they contract the disease. This information can be found on the OGB website. Additionally, OGB has included links to information from the CDC regarding the Coronavirus and what members can do to avoid contracting it.

Members can access this information by visiting [info.groupbenefits.org](http://info.groupbenefits.org) and clicking on the COVID-19 link on the homepage, or they may access it by clicking [here](#). OGB will continue to monitor and make updates as necessary.

## 2021 Insurance Premium Credit

### Deadline Extended

#### Live Better Louisiana

Earn your 2021 premium credit in just one step : by completing your preventive health checkup. Blue Cross works with an industry leader, Catapult Health, to bring preventive checkups to a **site near you**. You can schedule a free checkup with a licensed nurse practitioner and health technician through the online scheduler. You will get **lab-accurate diagnostic tests** and receive a full **Personal Health Report** with checkup results and recommendations.

**What do you do?** Schedule your appointment online at [www.TimeConfirm.com/OGB](http://www.TimeConfirm.com/OGB) or call **1-877-841-3058**. Complete your clinic to get the credit. If you are not able to go to a clinic, have your doctor fax a completed [Primary Care Provider Form](#) to Catapult Health.

#### Upcoming Clinics

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, on-site clinics for the month of April have been canceled. Catapult will be working with each site to reschedule these clinics and members who had appointments scheduled will receive an email with updates on the rescheduled appointments. A decision on May clinics will be made on April 15<sup>th</sup>. As a result of these cancellations, OGB has extended the deadline to **September 30, 2020** to get your preventive health checkup in order to be eligible for the 2021 wellness credit!

## OGB COVID-19 Changes

In light of COVID-19 and the recently enacted CARES ACT and LDI Emergency Rule 40, the Office of Group Benefits (OGB) will make the following changes to its benefit offerings, plans, and procedures:

1. Extend the healthcare FSA run-out period to June 30, 2020 (for Plan Year 2019);
2. Allow members to increase or decrease their dependent care contributions. Decreases cannot exceed the amount the member has already contributed to his or her dependent care FSA;
3. Include over-the-counter (OTC) medications as eligible expenses\* under the healthcare FSA or HSA plans *without* a doctor's prescription\*\*. All expenses incurred after December 31, 2019, qualify and the provision has no expiration date;
4. **Menstrual care products** are now considered a **qualified medical expense** and are eligible for payment or reimbursement through an FSA or HSA. All expenses incurred after December 31, 2019 qualify, and the provision has no expiration date;
5. HSA-qualified health plans can now cover telehealth and other remote care service expenses prior to a plan participant meeting the HDHP deductible limit, or at no or low-cost sharing, without affecting an account holder's ability to continue contributing to their HSA. This provision will last until December 31, 2021; and
6. Halt policy cancellations (and collections) for non-payment of health or life premiums (Louisiana Department of Insurance Emergency Rule 40).

For more on the CARES Act, click [here](#).

For more on LDI Emergency Rule 40, click [here](#).

If you have questions, please reach out to OGB customer service at 1-800-272-8451 or [OGB.customerservice@la.gov](mailto:OGB.customerservice@la.gov).

*\*At this time, the Pelican HRA 1000 plan document does not allow for coverage of OTC medications, menstrual care products, or for reimbursement of any Internal Revenue Code Section 105(b) medical expenses. This means the OTC and menstrual product coverage provisions of the CARES Act are inapplicable to Pelican HRA 1000 enrollees.*

*\*\*These changes apply to pre-existing accounts.*

# ORM Safety Spotlight

## Coronavirus and Flu

The Coronavirus is in the news and undoubtedly, you have heard about it. While there are currently only 15 cases here in the United States, it is still a concern. The Coronavirus has sickened over 64,000 people worldwide and there have been at least 1,380 deaths.

While the coronavirus is a concern, the common flu remains active and should not be taken lightly.

The CDC estimates that so far this season there have been at least 26 million flu illnesses, 250,000 hospitalizations and 14,000 deaths from flu. The CDC expects the flu season to last for several more weeks. In Louisiana, there have been some 68,000 flu cases reported this flu season.

### Flu Prevention:

- Get the flu vaccine. It is not too late to be vaccinated.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- [Wash your hands](#) often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like flu.

### Coronavirus Prevention:

There is currently no vaccine to prevent 2019-nCoV infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using facemasks.
  - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory viruses, including 2019-nCoV.
  - Facemask should be used by people who show symptoms of 2019 novel coronavirus, in order to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Preventing both the Flu and the Coronavirus involves practical measures that we should all be taking. Washing hands, staying away if you are sick, disinfecting surfaces, and covering your cough or sneeze are essential.

Lastly, relying on credible sources for information is key. The CDC and Louisiana Department of Health provide updates regarding infectious diseases daily. Do not rely on hearsay for your information regarding Flu or Coronavirus.

For further information, contact the CDC at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or [www.ldh.la.gov](http://www.ldh.la.gov).

## Online Tax Withholding Elections

### Suspended via LEO

Tax Withholding elections through LEO are currently suspended until further notice. This suspension is due to the upcoming IRS changes to the 2020 Form W-4. Employees wishing to make changes to their State or Federal withholding's will need to submit the appropriate tax forms to Human Resources for data entry.

For further questions, please contact Human Resources at (225) 342-3774.

## LDOE Brand and Communications Style Guides



Both guides can be found in your Google Team Drive under LDOE Documents and Training > Public Affairs > Branded Documents, and will be updated as new templates and tools are created. You can provide feedback to the Office of Public Affairs by emailing [\\_DOE-PublicAffairs@la.gov](mailto:_DOE-PublicAffairs@la.gov).

## Employee Birthdays - April



<b>1st</b> Litsy Witkowski Belinda Flaherty Elizabeth Chatelain Soraya Owen	<b>2nd</b> Zoa Bain	<b>3rd</b> Phyllis Butler	<b>4th</b> Aarika Dorsey	<b>5th</b> Thomas Gresham
<b>6th</b> Connie Hebert	<b>7th</b> Samantha Egge Tasha Anthony	<b>8th</b> Cidnae Ballet Kayla Batiste	<b>9th</b> Ashlyn Harrison Dana Dauzat Melissa Ligon	<b>10th</b> Aaliyah Lavalais
<b>11th</b>	<b>12th</b> Jerrica Bryant	<b>13th</b> Kelly McClure	<b>14th</b> Andrea Burl Jasmine Patton Chris Fruge	<b>15th</b>
<b>16th</b>	<b>17th</b> Audrey Pugh Lindsey Rhodes Tiffany Franklin	<b>18th</b> Tishunda Matthews	<b>19th</b>	<b>20th</b> Megan Thompson Patricia Doucet Roshonda Maxie
<b>21st</b> Candace Allen Deborah Gary Erika Pattman	<b>22nd</b> Taylor Dunn	<b>23rd</b>	<b>24th</b>	<b>25th</b> Frances Millican Natalie Gautier
<b>26th</b>	<b>27th</b>	<b>28th</b> Chloe Jones Jason Burden Jiasheng Zhang	<b>29th</b> Lana Hutchinson	<b>30th</b>

## Team Member Spotlight

Do you want to brag on a team member? Have great news to share? Please email [Maranda.Rispon@la.gov](mailto:Maranda.Rispon@la.gov) to be featured in the next edition of the Core Connection.

***\*Submissions for the May Core Connection must be received by Monday, May 11th.***

## **LDOE Contacts**

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## **LDOE Links**

[LDOE Website](#)  
[Contact Us](#)