

CORE CONNECTION

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FOR LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES



May 14, 2020

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COVID-19 Return to Work Guidance for LDOE Employees

On Monday, May 11, [Governor John Bel Edwards announced the decision to lift the statewide stay-at-home order](#) through Friday, June 5. Effective Friday, May 15, Louisiana will enter Phase One of reopening, and efforts to return our workforce to the workplace will begin.

In response to this announcement, and in alignment with guidance issued from the Office of the Commissioner, the Department has created [COVID-19 Return to Work Guidance for LDOE Employees](#). This guidance provides important information about

that created [Guidance on Return to Work Conditions for LEO Employees](#). This guidance provides important information about safeguards and health measures in place for staff asked to report to their customary work locations in the Claiborne building beginning May 18.

Please note that **not all staff are expected to report to the Claiborne building on May 18**. If you are expected to return to the building, your Assistant Superintendent will notify you before the end of the week. Staff who do not regularly report to the Claiborne building should continue to work remotely unless otherwise specified by your Assistant Superintendent.

The health and wellness of our employees is of the utmost importance. As such, remote work authorization will continue for employees with high-risk medical conditions and childcare needs. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your manager.

As always, thank you for your incredible dedication during these uncertain times and for your continued commitment to providing the necessary supports for all Louisiana students.

Preventing COVID-19 Course Now Available in LEO

New

The State Civil Service Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP) is pleased to announce the release of a new and timely course: **CPTP-SCS Preventing COVID-19**. This web-based training covers how the virus spreads and what state employees can do to avoid the virus both in the office and at home via hand washing, face covering, cleaning and disinfecting, physical distancing and more.

The course is now available in [LEO](#). Use the search term: **COVID**.

We invite you to take advantage of the resources and training SCS and the CPTP program have available during this time of transition. If you have any questions about this training or other CPTP web-based trainings that are available in LEO, please email Christie.Jackson@la.gov for assistance.

Health Savings Account 2019 Contributions

Deadline Extended

With the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), some changes have been made to the deadlines for filing your 2019 taxes and contributing to your 2019 health savings account (HSA).

The deadline to file your 2019 taxes and contribute to your 2019 HSA is now July 15, 2020. Please note the maximum annual contributions for 2019 are \$3,500 for individuals and \$7,000 for families. Starting at age 55, an additional \$1,000 is allowed annually.

Email communications from Health Equity were sent out beginning the week of April 16, 2020. If you have questions, please contact Health Equity at 1-877-987-8123 or memberservices@healthequity.com.

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 your cooperation and thank you for helping us be good stewards of our funds.

Travel Deadlines

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

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

P-Card Deadlines*

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

Invoice Deadlines

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

LEA/Subgrantee Claims Deadline

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

LDOE Employee Support Website

The [LDOE Employee Support Google Site](#) is a newly designed, dedicated space for the most up-to-date information for LDOE staff. By now, all LDOE employees should have received an email 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.

2020 Teacher Leader Summit

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. 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 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/>

Live Better Louisiana

May Newsletter

Mental Health Matters

Mental health is a very important part of our overall health and well-being now more than ever. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. **Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.** Click [here](#) for ways to boost your mental health.

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

2021 Insurance Premium Credit

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 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 the second half of May clinics will be made on May 1st. 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.

**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.*

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.

Employee Birthdays - May



1st David Hopkins	2nd Bernetta Sims Emily Kaiser	3rd	4th Kendra Randall Kenya Jenkins	5th
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	Rosemary Enlow Wyatt Vial			
6th Charelle Morgan	7th Elysia Howard	8th	9th Cassandra Brimmer	10th Brenda Pikes
11th Carol Troxler	12th	13th	14th Tanisha Wallace Wayne Dupre William Tindall	15th
16th Danielle Gordon Roxie Townley Tammy Bloyed	17th Bernell Cook Dana James-Maxie Melinda Wald Rachel Brown	18th	19th Rebecca Werner	20th Kimbra Lamonte
21st	22nd Chasidy Allen Judy Stracener Lakeisha Bryant Mia Brown Van Fabre	23rd	24th Anantha Lakkakula Michael Zanovec	25th Jeffrey Matherne
26th Jacqueline Droddy Latasha Roberson	27th Jamie Blanchard Jordan Willis	28th Sherry Duncan Sherry Randall	29th Hunter Brown	30th Angeline Beathley Elizabeth Carney Melanie Ruiz Sean Dimond
31st Madinah Hunt Whitney Ceaser				

Team Member Spotlight

Do you want to brag on a team or team member? Have great news to share? Please email Shannon.Hunt@la.gov to be featured in the edition of the Core Connection.

Thank You Human Resources

Sending a huge THANK YOU to Maranda Rispone, Shannon Hunt, and Aarika Dorsey in the HR department. Thanks for moving so quickly and supporting the agency through these trying times. We appreciate you all!

- Office of Academic Policy & Early Childhood

Congratulations to Breigh Rhodes

Breigh Rhodes (Academic Strategy) gave birth to a beautiful and healthy baby girl --- Elsie James Rhodes. While born during unconventional times, this didn't stop the proud daddy from showing her off to family and friends.





**Submissions for the June 10th Core Connection must be received by Wednesday, June 3rd.*

Welcome Our Newest Employees

LDOE is please to welcome our newest employees to our team!

Tana Luther - Education Program Consultant 2 - Academic Strategy

Rachel Brown - Education Program Consultant 3 - Diverse Learner Supports

Devon Camarota - Education Program Consultant 3 - Academic Policy & Early Childhood

Cindy Nguyen - Education Program Consultant 2 - Academic Policy & Early Childhood

LDOE Contacts

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LDOE Links

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

