

Good afternoon all,

Let me start by saying how much I appreciate and admire our state government workforce, in particular the dedicated and committed employees of our DAFS.

I am sorry I haven't written specifically to you since this started. Between the budget, the COVID Response Team effort, the legislative agenda, and statewide communication...well...I know you know what I've been doing.

Let me start with the legislative update:

- The Legislative session has ended early. There is a plan for a special session when the timing for that is appropriate.
- We have an emergency budget. See the details for LD 2126 here: <http://legislature.maine.gov/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280076767>
- Also, the Legislature has voted on some emergency measures related to COVID to help ensure the health and safety (including financial) of Maine citizens. See the details of LD 2167 here: <http://legislature.maine.gov/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280077132>

Now let's talk about the COVID-19 situation.

These are unprecedented times. COVID-19 has created extraordinary circumstances for which Governor Mills has declared a State of Emergency.

State government is balancing the need to provide services during this emergency to the citizens of Maine with the health and safety of our state employees. The responsibility to continue the important operations of the government remains paramount, and our valued and dedicated employees are essential to the mission.

All agencies are working to implement methods to support social distancing and limit potential exposure through reassignment of work areas, telework where able, and more flexible leave options where appropriate, understanding these options are limited for our 24/7 operations and public safety programs.

We are in a situation likely none of us has been in before. I know I haven't. And we are doing it in an environment of news coverage and social media that adds a unique challenge to understanding facts and staying calm.

Things are not "normal" and likely won't be for some time. That isn't meant to scare anyone...it's just a fact. This virus is new and that means unknown.

So, we have to adjust how we think about things. We need to pay more attention to the things we touch; the way we communicate with each other; the way we do our work; the way we treat each other.

We must assume best intentions. Ask before we react. Confirm what we think we know.

Click here for the most up to date information from Maine CDC. <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml>

We are already noticing the differences in our work place.

- We have posted notices at doors of state offices reminding employees and the public not to enter if they are sick with symptoms of the flu and virus.
- As part of social distancing:
 - People are working from home, which means those of us working in offices are surrounded by fewer people.
 - Offices are being closed to the public, except for some allowance for paper drop off.
 - Reminders of electronic methods for conducting State business are being posted.
- Our Property Management Division is increasing the cleaning of common spaces and frequently touched items like door handles.
- Hand sanitizer dispensers have been installed in Augusta area state-owned facilities.

Above all: We must remain calm. We must remain kind.

- 80% of the people who get this infection will not feel much more than a cold or mild flu. And a significant portion of the remaining 20% will be fine, but their symptoms may be more severe.
- Handwashing with soap and hot water for 20 seconds is still the best defense.
- Remember that each of our situations is different. We are doing our best to be consistent, but we will not achieve that. It is absolutely fact that the person who has a small child at home because of school closures or a person who is the only caretaker for their elderly loved one is in a different situation than a person who doesn't have those scenarios.

We are doing our best to communicate as quickly and accurately as possible. I can tell you that there are a number of people who have thought about nothing but this topic all day for days. Things are literally changing by the hour. And as they change and as we learn new things, we adjust our response.

We are inundated with questions and we are doing our best to get information out to you. We will be sending another statewide Q&A tomorrow.

Please keep going to our COVID-19 site for information. We will be expanding this page to include other statewide information, like state office closures. It also includes state employee-specific information, like our Q&As and emails. <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/covid-19>

As a reminder:

- If you are sick, stay home and call your health provider – do not visit them in person.
- Please continue to exercise care with personal hygiene, as these measures continue to be our best protection:

- Wash your hands frequently with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds;
- Keep your hands below your shoulders (away from your face); and
- Greet others from a distance, instead of shaking hands.

Please continue to route questions to your supervisors and our [Human Resources professionals](#). Know that these people are inundated with questions and will do their best to respond. Remember to read our Q&As before asking a question...maybe the answer is already there.

Be mindful of the needs of others. Stay calm. Stockpiling supplies may mean vulnerable neighbors are not able to get what they need. Please check on others, share, and be kind.

Thank you for being a part of the solution.

Kirsten LC Figueroa

Commissioner

Department of Administrative and Financial Services