

## DECISION TREE EXPLANATION

### NRLCA POSITION

1. USPS will be informed of a rural carrier testing positive either by a public health authority or by the carrier themselves. A carrier who tests positive is not required to provide that information to their supervisor but should provide it to the health unit or District OHNA (Occupational Health Nurse Administrator). Once the positive test is confirmed, the carrier will be allowed to use Sick Leave or Annual Leave until cleared to return to work. RCAs can utilize the balance of the 80 hours of paid leave granted under the RCA Leave MOU. If the carrier has insufficient leave balances, they may request Administrative Leave. The granting of Administrative Leave is at the discretion of the local manager. If denied Administrative Leave at this point, the carrier should file a grievance asking that Administrative Leave be granted as per this Decision Tree. If Administrative Leave is denied, the carrier will be placed on LWOP. **If the carrier believes that they have potentially been exposed at work, then number six would apply, and they should insist on being granted Administrative Leave and should grieve if Administrative Leave is denied.**
2. If the carrier is showing any of the listed symptoms, obviously we do not want them at work, and they should be sent home to avoid infecting others. In this case, since the carrier is sick and COVID has not been verified, leave is granted per Section 513 of the ELM as usual. The carrier takes Sick Leave. If insufficient Sick Leave is available, the carrier may take Annual Leave or LWOP at the carrier's option. **If the carrier believes that they have potentially been exposed at work, then number six would apply, and they should insist on being granted Administrative Leave and should grieve if Administrative Leave is denied.**
3. This section is a change from previous positions. Now, if a carrier shows no symptoms, they will be allowed to work when returning from international or cruise travel. The carrier should notify the OHNA when returning from international or cruise travel. If the carrier does show symptoms, they stay home on Annual or Sick Leave. If they are confirmed positive, then number one would apply. **If the carrier believes that they have potentially been exposed at work, then number six would apply, and they should insist on being granted Administrative Leave and should grieve if Administrative Leave is denied.**
4. If the carrier shares a household with a person tested positive for COVID, they should notify the OHNA. If the carrier has no symptoms they will be required to stay at home (up to 14 days) until household member has had no fever for at least 72 hours (at least 3 full days of no fever without the use of any fever-reducing medications) AND other symptoms have improved (for example, when cough or shortness of breath has improved) AND at least 7 days have passed since COVID-19 symptoms first appeared. The carrier will be allowed to use Sick Leave or Annual Leave until cleared to return to work. RCAs can utilize the balance of the 80 hours of paid leave granted under the RCA Leave MOU. If the carrier has insufficient leave balances, they may request Administrative Leave. The granting of Administrative Leave is at the discretion of the local manager. If denied Administrative Leave at this point, the carrier should file a grievance asking that Administrative Leave be granted as per this Decision Tree. If Administrative Leave is denied, the carrier will be placed on LWOP.

If the carrier does have symptoms of COVID, then they would remain home on Sick Leave as per ELM 513. If they subsequently test positive, then number one would apply. **If the carrier believes that they have potentially been exposed at work, then number six would apply, and they should insist on being granted Administrative Leave and should grieve if Administrative Leave is denied.**

5. If the carrier attests that they have been exposed outside of work, they should notify the OHNA. If the carrier shows no symptoms but the local health department or the rural carrier's physician recommends that the carrier quarantine, the rural carrier will be allowed to use Sick Leave or Annual Leave until cleared to return to work. RCAs can utilize the balance of the 80 hours of paid leave granted under the RCA Leave MOU. If the carrier has insufficient leave balances, they may request Administrative Leave. The granting of Administrative Leave is at the discretion of the local manager. If denied Administrative Leave at this point, the carrier should file a grievance asking that Administrative Leave be granted as per this Decision Tree. If Administrative Leave is denied, the carrier will be placed on LWOP. If exposed outside of work and showing symptoms, the carrier may use Sick Leave as per ELM 513. If the carrier subsequently tests positive, then number one would apply.
6. **This is the most important section of the Decision Tree.** The Postal Service has made it clear that if a rural carrier is potentially exposed at work, then Administrative Leave will be granted. It is our position that, for rural letter carriers who are being careful to follow CDC and other government guidelines and suggestions for COVID safety, their most logical place of exposure is the workplace. Rural carriers are in reasonably close contact with dozens of people each day in the course of their duties. Certainly, their best chance of exposure is at work.

**If a rural carrier is exposed and required to quarantine and not allowed to work or tests positive for COVID and is not able to work and the carrier believes that they have potentially been exposed at work, then number six would apply, and they should insist on being granted Administrative Leave and should grieve if Administrative Leave is denied.**

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Q: If I have been fully vaccinated against COVID 19 and become exposed, will I still have to quarantine?  
A: That would be up to the OHNA. As more employees become vaccinated, we expect the policy to evolve.
2. Q: Who will be the approving authority for Administrative leave?  
A: The local manager
3. Q: Who will be asking if the carrier has COVID symptoms when the carrier returns from travel?  
A: OHNA or Supervisor. Might be obvious from symptoms showing in carrier.
4. Q: If a rural carrier has symptoms will they be required to use Sick Leave if they have it available rather than LWOP or AL?  
A: If they have symptoms with no positive COVID test then ELM 513 would apply. The carrier can use Sick Leave or, if insufficient Sick Leave, they can use Annual leave or LWOP at the carrier's option.
5. Q: Can a rural carrier choose to take LWOP rather than burning their AL/SL?  
A: If the rural carrier has not tested positive or showing symptoms, then granting of LWOP would be at management's discretion.
6. Q: Who makes the final determination if a rural carrier can return to work and or is cleared to work?  
A: The OHNA.
7. Q: Can this document be retroactively applied?  
A: The FFCRA expired on 12-31-20. This document could be applied to any cases initiated after that date.
8. Q: How do we ensure that we are getting correct information about contact tracing?  
A: If a carrier maintains they were exposed at work under number six, then an RFI seeking all contact tracing information would be in order.
9. Q: Will a rural carrier who shares a household with a positive individual be required to have a negative test to return to work?  
A: The Return-to-Work Guidelines give discretion to the OHNA to allow a quarantined employee to return to work without a negative test or, at their judgement, to require a negative test, depending on the fact circumstances.
10. Q: How does one know they have been exposed?  
A: They might be notified by a public health organization, the USPS, or an acquaintance that they have potentially been exposed.
11. Q: If a carrier is out due to delays in the OHNA clearing them to come back to work after they have been released by their Doctor, should they be compensated with Administrative Leave?  
A: Yes, any delay in clearance to return to work should be covered by Administrative Leave.
12. Q: Is "*surgical mask*" different from the mask we are already mandated to wear and have been provided?  
A: No, that is the disposable mask provided by USPS.
13. Q: If a carrier is cleared to return to work after 10 days by county health department, but USPS insists on 14 days, should Administrative leave be granted for additional 4 days?

A: Yes, but, depending on where the carrier was exposed, Administrative Leave might be justified for the entire 14 days.

14. Q: If a Doctor's certifies that an asymptomatic essential worker can return to work while always wearing a mask, should they get paid Administrative Leave if the OHNA does not allow them to work?

A: Yes