

11 March 2020

Recommendation of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture issue the following recommendation to the employees of healthcare and social welfare services, providers of education and training including early childhood education, and higher education institutions. The ministries recommend that employees remain at home on a low-threshold basis in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus if they have returned from an area affected by the coronavirus epidemic or experience flu symptoms. This recommendation concerns the employees of healthcare and social welfare services, providers of education and training including early childhood education, and higher education institutions.

The ministries recommend that, if an employee of municipal healthcare and social welfare services, early childhood education or other education services is suspected to have been exposed to the coronavirus, the employer shall take the necessary measures to prevent the spread of possible infection. It is recommended that the employer take the measures provided for in the Municipal Civil Service Act, the Employment Contracts Act and the collective agreement for government employees in order to implement these arrangements and safeguard service capacity.

The ministries recommend that employees be allowed, upon their notification, to work remotely for a period of time deemed necessary by the employer, for example. The necessary period of time refers to the time needed to rule out the possibility of a coronavirus infection.

If the employee's current duties cannot be carried out remotely, it is recommended that the employer, as permitted by their management powers, assign other tasks corresponding to the employee's competence that enable remote work or are such that the employee's potential exposure to coronavirus would not pose a risk of infection to others.

According to current information, coronavirus (COVID-19) poses a particular risk to older people and people with multiple pre-existing conditions. Particular attention should therefore be paid to operating units whose clients and patients belong to these at-risk groups.

Municipalities and joint municipal authorities shall follow their plans and guidelines on the impact of an epidemic on work and protection measures.

Hospital districts, municipalities and joint municipal authorities for healthcare and social welfare shall comply with their regional contingency plans for dealing with major accidents and exceptional medical emergencies. Social services are provided in exceptional situations in accordance with the Social Welfare Act.

To prevent the spread of the spread of the coronavirus, school work may need to be arranged in alternative ways in certain places. In practice, this might mean changes in the places and ways teaching is organised, combining teaching groups, changes to working hours, distance teaching, preparations for organising remedial teaching for those who need to catch up, and so on.

It is important to remember the old advice: if you have flu or other symptoms, do not attend school or hobbies.

Guidance for municipalities, hospital districts and regional state administrative agencies on how to prepare for coronavirus infections issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Association of Local and Regional Authorities on 4 March 2020 (in Finnish and Swedish):

https://stm.fi/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/kuntainfo-ohje-kuntiin-sairaanhoitopiireihin-ja-aluehallinto-virastoihin-koronavirustilanteeseen-varautumisessa

Guidance for employers on remote work and the reorganisation of employees' tasks in the event of a coronavirus epidemic issued by the Commission for Local Authority Employers on 4 March 2020 (in Finnish and Swedish): <https://www.kt.fi/sopimukset/ohjeet/kvtes/koronavirus-kuntatyopaikoilla>

The National Board of Education and the Matriculation Examination Board have compiled information on their websites (in Finnish and Swedish) for schools, educational institutions and early childhood education providers on how to prepare for the coronavirus.

<https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/opetustoimi-ja-koronavirus>

<https://www.ylioppilastutkinto.fi/koronavirukseen-varautuminen>