

COVID-19 Panel Session

Pt.1 – HR / Pt.2 – CSC

NCAOC/HR & CSC Expert panelists will be offering feedback/recommendations & sharing the difficult situations they faced as a direct result & in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Prepare any questions you would like to hear discussed as the floor opens for the freestyle Q&A portion.

HR Panelists

Russ Eubanks – Chief Human Resources Officer, Chris Hicks – Safety & COOP Manager Christine Villaverde – Safety & COOP Consultant, Leila Jabbar – Human Resources Manager, & Debbie Tant – Salary Administration Specialist.

CSC Panelists

NC Elected Clerks, Jan Kennedy (New Hanover), Michelle Ball (Johnston), Elizabeth Craver (Pender), & Lisa Johnson-Tonkins (Guilford).

Part 1 – NCAOC/HR COVID Panel

Starter topics/questions

- **Beacon codes:**

- Quick refresher on which codes to use pertaining to COVID in which situations, necessary paperwork, expiration dates, etc.? Current or new staffing guidelines that have recently gone into effect?

- **Employee Vaccinations:**

- With the decision to receive the vaccination being an individual's personal choice, suggestions on how to handle a divided staff – those choosing to be vaccinated and those NOT willing or adamantly refusing? **Personal leave vs. leave without pay** (allowable for those who choose not to be vaccinated after being asked to, and then feel they have been exposed...when according to CDC guidelines, you do not have to stay out of work if you have been vaccinated and are exposed)
- Although we are now moving into the phase in which court staff is now eligible to receive the vaccine (state saying as of March 10th), there are many counties still behind in receiving/or on a backlog. And on the flipside, some clerks are simply refusing or waiting for the better one. Do you foresee a potential HR policy being put in place, that would require judicial staff vaccinations in the near future?

- Recommendation/suggestions/guidelines (current) pertaining to vaccinated vs. non-vaccinated staff? For example, which code to use if an employee has refused the vaccination, then tests positive for covid and/or needs to be out due to exposure/quarantine? Any chance of reducing/eliminating the COVID leave for employees who have refused the vaccine in counties that have offered (as documented by the Hiring Authority)?

- **Staffing Issues:**

- In your opinion, should we be requesting/requiring a doctor's note when we have staff out sick? If it's only for a day? But when "it's only a day" starts happening weekly... it starts to add up and no longer a day...it's become a habit.
- If an employee is scheduled and does in fact take a covid test the day they're out sick, and the result is negative, are they allowed to stay out of work the remainder of the day? Would that be considered an approved "sick day" or fall under a different code?
- **Guidance/support with hiring temp positions** – obviously employees with some background experience in the judicial system/former clerks/retired clerks, etc. is a #1 preference. Seems counterproductive to hire a "temp" who needs to be fully trained. In need of productive employees who can jump right in with little to no immediate training.

Part 2 – Clerk's COVID Panel

Starter topics/questions

- **Mandatory Masks**

- Suggestions on what to do if you are faced with either non-cooperating Sherriff's Dept/security and/or counterparts/other hiring authorities (ex. Judges, DA's, etc.) not properly enforcing your courthouse's mask policy... OR leniency with allowing the public to enter despite showing signs of one or more covid symptoms...OR not wearing masks themselves, nor enforcing others to wear masks? What can be done without having to carry a "big stick"?

- **Employee Vaccinations:**

- Difficulty with readily available access to vaccine? In office policy/guidelines on employee vaccinations? Should be left up to the individual counties according to the state's county alert map (indicating "hot spots" with critical levels of viral spread) Vaccinated vs. non-vaccinated staff?

● **Staffing Issues:**

- Coverage issues when there are multiple staff out due to exposure/quarantine/ or covid positive? Haven't had a full staff since December, and though we are cross trained, our office is segregated.
- Courthouse/clerk's office closings?? Rotating staff/half-staff? Social distancing your clerks from each other; social distancing from the public when opening new estates?
- Staff not wanting to work if a co-worker's family member has been exposed?
- You have an employee in the office that abuses his/her sick leave. During COVID times, do you bring him/her in to discuss and risk the chance that because you've brought this to their attention, they won't miss work at all (because they will think that you think they're not really sick but "abusing time" again)? Is it best to let it ride until the pandemic clears up? Recommendations?
- My bookkeeper/back-up Estate clerk's daycare is still operating on a "covid" schedule. She comes in at 8:30 every morning and leaves at 4:30 every day. Now my head Estate Clerk's school is on an A-B schedule which takes her out of the office 2 or more days. We are a very small office, and as such these 2 opposing circumstances cause hardship on a daily basis. Suggestions?
- To what extent and nature of accommodations be made for the "high risk" team member?
- Dependable Child Care (or lack thereof)? Plus, the virtually learning requirements added to our staff.

● **Current & "Moving forward" Issues...**

- Which directives are in place (effective now), and which ones have expired?
- How to proceed/move courts forward; adding more courts in attempts to handle the backlog that has built up over the past year? How to staff accordingly when you have yet to return to a "normal full staff"? How do we begin to recover from the aftermath/damage caused by COVID?
- When is a WebEx hearing/trial okay?
- Jury trial and selection off site; how are others handling these?
- COVID has highlighted the lack of computer hardware needed for all staff to participate FULLY in WebEx – lack of robust internet connections, camera, mics, etc. Being an ICMS pilot county has allowed many of our staff (courtroom clerks, most estate clerks & almost all assistant clerks) to receive updated computer equipment. Moving forward, ALL staff needs to be included!

- The domino effect of events created by COVID needs to be communicated to our “supporting community” in **REAL TIME** (w/o requiring the creation of a help desk ticket(s)). The elected officials in the field, actively keeping the “wheels” of the Courthouses running daily, need to be able to submit changes/updates & communicate directly with the AOC contact that can assist when call upon... at that precise moment (not waiting for a follow up once they are finally in receipt of our ticket and assigned to our request).