



April 7, 2020

To ESC Medical Professionals:

As you well know, our employers' responses to COVID-19 have been changing rapidly. We are working as best we can to track situations, intervene when needed for our members, and push management towards better practices. We write today with these important updates:

1. Exposure or Possible Exposure at Work. If you believe you have been exposed at work or have been put off work because of a potential exposure, please notify your union rep. We want to track these incidents and also advise you on what to ask of management under these circumstances, as you may be eligible to file a claim for workers' compensation. We are reminding all of our employers of their duty to comply with Cal-OSHA and CDC workplace standards, and have requested all relevant policies and prompt notification to the union if there are any reportable incidents.

2. Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) under the CARES Act. Many of our workers have of course expressed great concern about pay continuation, if circumstances are such that they must be off work due to the pandemic. We are seeking enhanced benefits from our employers to address these unprecedented circumstances and hope we will have some success in this area to report to you soon.

There is some helpful news to relay right now: if you are at the point where you have exhausted any paid leave available to you for COVID-19 related reasons, recent guidance from the Federal Department of Labor has clarified that you have access to the enhanced Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits created by the CARES Act.

The PUA program provides for up to 39 weeks of benefits for people who are unemployed, underemployed, or unavailable to work due to COVID-19 related reasons. COVID-19 related-reasons include the need to be a caregiver due to school closures, or your own decision to

self-isolate and stay off work because of health concerns. Short-hour workers who have lost work due to the pandemic also are eligible.

The enhanced benefits under the PUA are administered through the Unemployment Insurance program run by the California EDD. A very useful FAQ about eligibility and access to this benefit can be found here: https://www.edd.ca.gov/about_edd/coronavirus-2019/faqs.htm#UIBenefits.

NOTE: If you have suffered a loss in wages because you are ill with COVID-19 or you are caring for a family member with COVID-19, you may be eligible for State Disability Insurance (SDI) or Paid Family Leave (PFL), if you work for an employer that pays into the SDI fund (CASDI on your pay stub). These are different programs than the Unemployment Insurance/Pandemic Unemployment Assistance described above. Information about COVID-19 and SDI and PFL can be found here: https://www.edd.ca.gov/about_edd/coronavirus-2019/faqs.htm#DIBenefits.

3. The Union is advocating that COVID-19 testing be made available to health care workers. As testing becomes more available, we believe our employers should offer regular testing and re-testing to their workers. It is a threat to the health and safety of all workers, and everyone in our communities who seek treatment, if health care workers are not aware of their status. We are therefore developing a proposal for testing protocols that we anticipate we will be able to deliver to our employers early next week.

In addition, to further the critical public health strategy of social distancing, we are continuing to work out remote arrangements for as many people as possible. For all essential workers who must be physically present at the workplace, we have requested the social distancing plans now required of Bay Area employers in order to monitor compliance.

Finally, the Union has created and is maintaining a [COVID-19 resource page](#) with general information about emergency benefits, safety standards, and the overall work of our union in response to the pandemic.

In solidarity,

Michael Aidan, Assistant Executive Director/Senior Union Representative
maidan@ifpte20.org

Nick Steinmeier, Senior Union Representative
nsteinmeier@ifpte20.org

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