



# NYC Department of Investigation's Reconstitution Plan

COVID-19

May 2020

## INTRODUCTION

This preliminary plan was created in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) took into consideration the health and safety of its employees and members of the public whom it serves, and also consulted with senior leadership in order to come up with a plan for reconstitution.<sup>1</sup> Since late March, over 90% of DOI's workforce has been working remotely. A small number of employees whose essential work cannot be done remotely have continued to report to their work location, and another small group of employees whose non-essential work cannot be done remotely have been furloughed with pay.<sup>2</sup> Some aspects of DOI's normal investigative work have been paused because they cannot be performed effectively or safely in the current environment (e.g. in-person interviews); we have continued to conduct some of these activities in circumstances where law enforcement or public health and safety concerns outweigh the potential health risks. This plan is intended for internal use only – not for external distribution.

## INITIAL RETURN TO WORK PHASE

DOI plans to bring back up to 50% of essential and non-essential personnel to the workplace during the first three months after the New York City region is permitted to resume “office-based” workplace operations. However, our plan is based on distributing those employees so that no more than 25% of our employees are physically in the office at any one point in time. While still encouraging and expecting the majority of employees to continue to work from home, we are confident that we can support 25% of the workforce working in our office space while maintaining social distancing and other safety protocols.

Decisions about who will continue to either remote-work full-time or partially return to the office will be guided by balancing a number of factors, including employee preferences, ability to effectively perform job functions remotely, and employees' pandemic-related concerns such as commuting method, availability of childcare or elder care options, and whether the employee or a member of their household is at high risk. Employees who will partially return to work will be placed in two teams; each team will report to the office on up to four days in alternating weeks. Members of both teams will have the option to work from home on some

<sup>1</sup> Plan may be amended once guidance on best practices from DOHMH and DCAS are made available.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the employees in this group have been assigned other duties that can be accomplished remotely.

days of their assigned week, as well as do compressed or staggered work schedules. No employee will report to the office more than four days in a two-week period; these employees will work remotely on the remaining days of their workweek and during their off-week. The four-day-alternate week schedule ensures that in each week there is a full 72 hour time period when the office is unoccupied (the maximum time that public health guidance suggests the virus could be transmissible from most surfaces) and also ensures that in each cycle every employee has at least 10 days at home following any period in the office in contact with their co-workers (allowing time for symptom development/testing/ tracing/isolation measures if exposure to the virus makes such measures necessary).<sup>3</sup> See sample work schedule below.

	WEEK 1							WEEK 2						
	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU
<b>Team A</b>	Report to the office				Office is							Office is		
<b>Team B</b>				unoccupied				Report to the office			unoccupied			

DOI intends to put the following additional protocols into place in order to ensure a smooth and safe transition to return to work:

- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection procedures:
  - Contracted cleaning company will be asked to clean frequently visited areas at least twice a day.
  - DOI’s Facilities Unit will clean high touch areas (e.g. door knobs, elevator buttons, pantries) periodically throughout the workday on any day when the office is occupied.
  - Disinfecting wipes will also be placed near high touch areas (e.g. copy rooms, pantries) and will be given to Supervisors so each staff member can clean their personal work area as needed.
  - Signage reminding employees to wash their hands, maintain social distancing, and report COVID-related symptoms will be posted on all DOI floors.
  - Filters on HVAC system will be changed monthly.
- Public-facing spaces:

<sup>3</sup> Alon, Uri, et al. “10-4: How to Reopen the Economy by Exploiting the Coronavirus’s Weak Spot.” *N.Y. Times*, May 5, 2020. Opinion. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/11/opinion/coronavirus-reopen.html>).

- During the Initial Return to Work Phase DOI will continue to operate with limited to no interaction with members of the public. Interviews will be held via telephone or video wherever possible; we will continue to direct any walk-in complainants to DOI's webpage where telephone and mailing information, as well as online complaint forms, are available.
- Floor plan modifications:
  - DOI is spread across eight floors which provide sufficient square footage for the implementation of social distancing, therefore there are currently no plans to make any changes to work areas.
  - Assignment of employees to either full-time remote work or to teams of in-office work will take into account the need to space out assigned work locations within the office.
- Protective equipment allocation:
  - Cloth facemasks were purchased for all employees and will be distributed as employees return to work. A supply of disposable face masks is also available to provide to employees or visitors as needed.
  - The Executive Director of Facilities will oversee PPE orders and distribution.

## **NEXT RETURN TO WORK PHASE**

Will be guided by the success of the Initial Return to Work Phase and the public health guidance at that time.

## **CONCERNS**

What aspects of your operation are you most concerned about restarting from a health perspective?

- In-person interviews/meetings (candidate selection, background interviews, walk-in complainants, investigative interviews)
- Training (DOI's training floor is often used by outside agencies)

What new resources do you anticipate needing in order to restart?

- Hand-held thermometers
- A reliable re-supply of face-coverings (cloth and disposable) as needed

## **ADDITIONAL MEASURES TAKEN BY DOI**

DOI surveyed all staff anonymously to better understand the needs and concerns regarding return to work. (The survey questions are attached to this document as Attachment A) This survey helped the team navigate and define the following points:

- DOI is taking count of unoccupied offices and assessing the benefits of temporarily reassigning them to staff working in cubicles.
- Pantry etiquette guidelines are being drafted to discourage sharing of food/beverages (food is to be labeled and closely monitored for expiration dates).
- Signage regarding COVID-19, webclock usage, and hygiene are being prepared.

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<sup>4</sup> Offices reserved for backfills of vacant positions.