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Correspondence Memorandum

Date: September 13, 2021
To: Employee Trust Funds Board
From: Pam Henning, Assistant Deputy Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Subject: COVID-19 Pandemic Update

This memo is for informational purposes only. No Board action is required.

Since our June board meeting, the pandemic has resulted in more twists and turns in changes with mask mandates, vaccination reporting requirements and reopening/resumption of ETF onsite services.

ETF Onsite Services Begin

- Beginning July 6, ETF's resumed onsite front desk and quick service functions, allowing our members to drop off forms or address simple benefit-related questions in person. Plexiglass was installed to provide comfort and protection for our staff and customers.
- On July 12, onsite group counseling sessions were made available for our members in ETF's 8th floor conference room in the Hill Farms State Office Building (HFSOB). (Note: This offering is discontinued since very low attendance.)
- Starting July 19, we slowly opened up one-on-one individual counseling sessions in our private counseling rooms, offering eight appointments four days per week. Plexiglass and additional ventilation were installed in private counseling rooms for member and staff comfort and safety.
- Virtual appointments continue to be well attended, as well as offering one weeknight group counseling session for those unable to schedule daytime appointments.
- Unvaccinated members visiting the HFSOB and ETF suites must wear a mask. Vaccinated customers are strongly encouraged to wear a mask in state office buildings.

Board	Mtg Date	Item #
EXC	9.15.21	3A
BUD	9.16.21	3A
ETF	9.16.21	7D

Return to Office Delayed

Since March 17, 2020, almost all Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) staff have been working from home (WFH) in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Up to 25 staff continue reporting to ETF's physical offices daily, providing essential business functions such as mail services, scanning and indexing retirement and other benefit related documents, preparing and printing retirement estimate information for members, and ensuring checks to members and vendors are distributed timely.

ETF had planned to return staff onsite to HFSOB beginning September 7 using a hybrid work model allowing for flexible work schedules based upon each business unit's requirements. As a result of the rising cases of the Delta variant, new mask requirements imposed by the Department of Administration (DOA) for all state employees working within state office buildings, and the new mask mandate by Public Health of Madison and Dane County, a decision to delay staff returning to the office was made to extend until November 1. We will continue to monitor guidance from federal, state and local health experts to determine if staff will return in November or another delay to return is extended further out. ETF's first priority is the health and safety of our staff and the members we serve.

Vaccination Status Requirements

Beginning August 23, DOA required all state employees (permanent, project and limited term) and contractors to report their vaccination status by September 9. As of September 13, ETF's vaccination reporting status is over 95% with close to 90% of staff vaccinated. The state has provided many opportunities to encourage vaccinations including providing clinics around Wisconsin with two vaccination clinics at the HFSOB, and the more recent \$100 gift card incentive for anyone obtaining their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. ETF also has promoted vaccinations via an agency video, "Why we Received Our Vaccine," with testimonials from the Executive Team and staff as well as two agency-wide Q&A sessions called *COVID-19 Q&A with Brian Stamm*. Brian is ETF's Deputy Director of the Office of Strategic Health Policy who is in his final semester at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health completing his master's degree in Infectious Disease Epidemiology. Additionally, Brian is a board member of the Dane County Immunization Coalition and performs upper respiratory infectious disease research at UW-Madison's School of Medicine and Public Health. We are fortunate to have Brian's expertise to address questions from staff directly and within the state health program.

Next Steps

In the meantime, ETF continues its planning for the eventual return of more onsite staff by preparing onboarding informational guides, hotel office/cube scheduling, distributing sanitization and social distancing guidelines throughout ETF spaces, and prepping or purchasing IT equipment and tools to meet individual and conference room needs for both onsite and virtual meetings. In addition, we continue to work with DOA to reduce

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ETF floor space within the HFSOB. This will result in consolidating functions and offices/cubes for staff from three to two floors and reducing ongoing leasing costs.

I will be available at the September 16 Board meeting to answer any questions.