

HHS UPDATE

NTEU National Treasury Employees Union

Coronavirus Crisis Demands a Clear, Consistent Telework Policy

NTEU is aware that management across OpDivs is handling telework inconsistently despite White House guidance and despite direction from public health officials. If you've been getting mixed messages on telework, we understand the anger, anxiety and frustration you're experiencing from the lack of clear guidance and the feeling of disregard for your health and safety.

Earlier this week, NTEU released a [checklist](#) of eight actions the federal government should immediately take to protect employees. First on our list is closing all federal buildings with 50 or more employees to comply with direction from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NTEU also pressed for removing all barriers to telework; extending administrative leave to employees where school is closed or they have family members who are quarantined or self-isolating; halting all travel; and making coronavirus testing available to federal employees, free of charge, if their doctor recommends it.

We followed up our checklist with a [letter](#) yesterday to the Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reiterating our request to close office buildings that house 50 or more federal employees.

"So far throughout this crisis, many federal employees have not been given information they need from their agencies and are confused and frustrated, fearing for their health and that of their colleagues and loved ones," National President Tony Reardon wrote to OMB Acting Director Russell Vought.

For its part, OMB issued a second [memo](#) on coronavirus this week, this time with stronger and more direct guidance on telework. The memo instructs agencies to "minimize face-to-face interactions, especially at those offices or sites where people may be gathering in close proximity or where highly vulnerable populations obtain services." OMB added that telework should be maximized nationwide and mandated if necessary while maintaining mission-critical workforce needs.

If you've felt left in the dark by a lack of clear and consistent information about your workplace in this crisis, you are not alone. NTEU is not getting the information we need from HHS leadership to help keep you informed at this critical time.

HHS—the agency devoted to promoting public health and safety— should lead by strictly following the advice of public health officials, and NTEU will continue working diligently

to see that commonsense and necessary steps are implemented. We will keep you updated on any new developments.

[Learn more about what you can do](#)

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“...to ensure that every federal employee is treated with dignity and respect.”