

From: [A Message from the Commissioner](#)
To: [FDA-Wide](#)
Subject: COVID-19 Update
Date: Sunday, May 17, 2020 10:23:40 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)

From the Desk of the Commissioner



Dear Colleagues,

In a White House press conference Friday, it was announced that our own Drs. Janet Woodcock and Peter Marks will be bringing their diverse experience to cross-government efforts to expedite the development and availability of therapeutics and vaccines to combat COVID-19 under the Operation Warp Speed Project. The fact that Drs. Woodcock and Marks are playing such pivotal leadership roles in this effort speaks volumes to their abilities and the confidence the nation has in our agency. Drs. Woodcock and Marks will continue as directors of their respective centers while working closely with other center and agency leadership to ensure continuity of day-to-day operations. They will also recuse themselves from the supervisory chain of command in matters related to product review decisions for applications related to the areas that they are advancing that have a nexus to COVID-19.

The President's Coronavirus Task Force continues to analyze and monitor the prevalence of the virus in the U.S. using the best available science to track, predict and mitigate the curve of the pathogen. While there are metropolitan areas that are now moving to a stable or declining state in COVID-19 positive cases, such as New York City, Providence, Boston, Chicago and Houston, some cities are seeing persistence in COVID-19 positive cases, including the Washington, DC and Baltimore areas, Minneapolis, Dallas and Portland.

With those data in mind, Chief Operating Officer Jim Sigg provided important direction Friday that ***all FDA telework-eligible employees should continue teleworking until further notice***. This direction is in alignment with the [National Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#), guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the FDA Leadership Team's commitment to putting our employees and their families first.

As we continue to develop plans for an eventual phased return to FDA facilities, we will also continue to take a measured and deliberate approach that ensures your health and safety remain uppermost in our approach. We will be closely assessing local health and operational conditions in states across our nation, particularly in the Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia area since the data indicate that this geographic area is continuing to experience COVID-19 cases.

Remember you have my commitment that employees will be afforded maximum flexibility for continuing to take care of children and other family members while carrying out FDA work. As we continue to go through this together, I really commend everyone for doing their very best in meeting your work responsibilities while being mindful of what we are all going through as individuals. I know it hasn't been easy, and everyone's circumstance is unique, which is also why I want employees to feel supported during this prolonged period of time. So, when the FDA decides the time is right to initiate a phased approach for employees to return to FDA facilities, the agency will continue to offer workplace flexibilities to employees, including those who the CDC identifies as being at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, and employees managing dependent care while continuing to work.

I want to end by saying thank you for all of the warm thoughts sent my way after sharing with you my potential exposure to COVID-19. I continue to feel healthy as well as truly blessed to be a part of the FDA family.

To all employees, please be extra careful to keep yourself and your loved ones safe, using the power you have as individuals to #SlowTheSpread. Be good to yourselves and please take the time you need to protect and promote YOUR public health. Stay safe, well and #FDAstrong.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Hahn, M.D.
Commissioner of Food and Drugs

