



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION 20210104-002

Date: January 4, 2021

Subject: COVID+ public safety personnel who can qualify for workers compensation benefits should receive HR support so that they receive a full measure of those benefits.

Motioned by: Rebecca Webber

Seconded by: Rocky Lane

Background facts: --33% of ATCEMS COVID+ medics have received workers compensation benefits.
--72% of APD COVID+ officers have received workers compensation benefits.

--ATCEMS has adopted a presumption that medics who test positive WERE NOT exposed at work.

--APD adopted the opposite presumption: that COVID+ officers WERE exposed at work.

--ATCEMS employs a single HR staff person to assist injured medics with their workers compensation applications. This staff person is also tasked with assisting medics with their FMLA paperwork.

--APD has two full-time employees assisting injured police officers to obtain the workers compensation benefits that they are entitled to receive.

Recommendation: We recommend that the City Council direct the City Manager ensure that all front-line public safety personnel obtain the full measure of workers compensation benefits to which they are entitled. The following policies should be enacted as soon as possible:

1. All three public safety departments should adopt a presumption that a COVID+ employee was injured at work [note that APD has already adopted this policy].
2. All three departments (but especially EMS) should be given additional HR resources to assist employees with the complicated process of obtaining workers compensation

benefits. All public safety employees interacting with the public on the job should be made aware by HR that they CAN and SHOULD apply for workers compensation benefits as soon as they become COVID+. After that, all employees who choose to apply should be supported throughout the process.

3. The Human Resources Department should immediately undertake oversight of this process to ensure that all of Austin's front-line public safety personnel are treated fairly and equitably as they continue to risk COVID exposure every day on the job.

Vote:

For: Unanimous (Commissioner Rebecca Gonzales, Rebecca Webber, Rocky Lane, Rebecca Bernhardt, Kathleen Hausenfluck, Nelly Ramirez, Michael Sierra-Arevalo and Daniela Nunez

Against: zero

Abstain: zero

Absent: Commissioner William (Bill) Kelly

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

Janet Jackson
