

## **Handling COVID-19 Cases in the Workplace: What Employers Need to Know**

Employers can play an important role in helping New York City (NYC) slow the spread of COVID-19 by quickly addressing cases of COVID-19 in their workplaces.

Please refer to New York State COVID-19 [requirements](#) and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (NYC Health Department) [Reopening FAQ](#) for additional information regarding physical distancing, face coverings, hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and other topics.

*Call the Health Department at **866-692-3641** with any questions or to report a confirmed COVID-19 case.*

### **How will I know that a staff member has COVID-19?**

You may learn directly from the staff member. You may also be contacted by the NYC Health Department, as described below.

### **How should I conduct daily health screenings?**

Use the [sample screening tool](#) in the way that makes sense for your workplace. Ideas for screening include:

- Call staff before they leave home to ask the screening questions.
- Set up an automated phone line that allows staff to indicate yes/no and have someone monitor the line to ensure compliance.
- Issue an auto-generated email or survey that enables a response.
- If screening from home is not feasible, designate a screening area and distribute the screening questions on paper to staff and visitors when they arrive to the program. If written forms are used, they should not identify the individual by name.

### **What should I do if one of my staff members tells me that they have COVID-19?**

- To report a confirmed case of COVID-19 or if you have any questions, call the Health Department at 866-692-3641.
- If the staff member is at the worksite, they should return home immediately. If they are at home, they should not come to work. See below for how long an individual with COVID-19 should be excluded from work.

### **What is contact tracing and how is it performed at a worksite?**

- When a NYC resident receives a positive diagnostic test for COVID-19, their result is shared directly with the City, as required by law. This triggers an investigation to identify people who may have been exposed, called contact tracing.
- The NYC Health Department will determine the person's likely "infectious period," which is the time period when they can spread the virus.

- If the person with COVID-19 discloses their worksite to the contact tracer, the NYC Health Department will contact the worksite to determine if the person was at work during their infectious period.
  - If the person was not at work during their infectious period, unless the worksite is directed otherwise, there is nothing more to do.
  - If the person was at work during their infectious period, the NYC Health Department will work with the worksite to identify close contacts. A close contact is someone who has been within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes of the person with COVID-19 during their infectious period.
  - Anyone who is a close contact must stay home for 14 days, even if they test negative for COVID-19.

**How long should a staff member who is confirmed with COVID-19 (positive diagnostic test) be excluded from work?**

- People who have COVID-19 must isolate and not return to work until all the following are true:
  - It has been at least 10 days since their symptoms started.
  - They have not had a fever for the prior 24 hours without use of fever-reducing drugs such as Tylenol or ibuprofen.
  - Their overall illness has improved.
- People who never had symptoms but have a positive test result should stay home for 10 days from the date they were tested.
- Once the person has met the above criteria, they may end their isolation and return to work. People should **not** be required to show a negative COVID-19 test result in order to return to work. Requiring a negative COVID-19 test result is not an appropriate criterion for returning to work, as many people test positive long after the infectious period has ended.

**How long should a staff member who has symptoms of COVID-19 be excluded from work?**

- If the person has symptoms and does not receive a COVID-19 diagnostic test, they cannot return to work until they meet the above isolation requirements (at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started, they have not had a fever for the prior 24 hours without use of fever-reducing drugs, and their overall illness has improved).
- If the person had symptoms and their test result is negative, they can return to work after they have not had a fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. The negative test result must be a lab-confirmed diagnostic test. If they are not sure what kind of test they had, they can ask the health care provider who performed your test.

**Can a staff member who has been tested for COVID-19 attend work while waiting for their test result?**

A person who has had symptoms of COVID-19 within the last 10 days must stay home while they wait for their test results. If the individual has been told to quarantine because they have been identified as a close contact or because of recent travel, they must stay home for the full 14 days.

**Can I share information about the person with COVID-19 with my other staff?**

No. You should not reveal the identity of the person with COVID-19 (other than to the NYC Health Department staff assisting in the investigation) or share information about the person with COVID-19. That information is confidential. Maintaining confidentiality will help encourage other people to disclose when they have COVID-19.

**Who should I tell to stay home if one of my staff members has COVID-19?**

The NYC Health Department will work with you to identify close contacts. Close contacts will then be notified by the NYC Test & Trace Corps and told to stay home and quarantine. Anyone not identified by the NYC Health Department as a close contact can come to work if they pass the health screening.

**When do I need to shut down my office?**

The NYC Health Department will work closely with workplaces to help ensure appropriate precautions are taken. Decisions about closing a workplace depends on the number of cases, the nature of the work environment, and other factors.

**Do I need to do any special cleaning or disinfection in the areas the person with COVID-19 used while in their infectious period?**

Close off areas used by the person confirmed to have COVID-19 and follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines on [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#) when cleaning and disinfecting those spaces.

**What if someone in my workplace has had an COVID-19 antibody test?**

A positive or negative antibody test result should not be used to make any decisions about whether someone can work or attend the facility. Antibody tests for COVID-19 cannot be used to detect whether someone is currently sick or infected. It is also not yet known whether a positive antibody test means that someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again.

**The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves. 9.4.2020**