



Interim Guidance for Procedures When Identifying an Employee with Concerns for COVID-19 Exposures

March 11, 2020

Background:

In December 2019, a new respiratory disease called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was detected in China. COVID-19 is caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2) that is part of a large family of viruses called coronaviruses.

To help prevent spread of COVID-19, procedures and supplies should be in place to encourage proper hand and respiratory hygiene and avoid close contact with people who are sick, and including staying home when you are sick.

Hand Hygiene:

Signage with handwashing procedures should be posted in prominent locations promoting hand hygiene.

- Regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done:
 - Before and after eating.
 - After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing.
 - After using the restroom.
 - Before handling food.
 - After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated.
 - After using shared equipment and supplies like electronic equipment such as keyboards, mice and phones.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Respiratory Hygiene:

- Covering coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of elbow.
- Disposing of soiled tissues immediately after use.

Procedures for Addressing Employees with Concerns for COVID-19 Exposures:

For purposes of coronavirus, there are both a mandatory quarantine protocol and a precautionary quarantine protocol. By definition, mandatory quarantine is the classification which can be directed by legal order if not complied with. LHDs must utilize the following definitions in determining whether or not to institute a mandatory or precautionary quarantine:



Department of Health

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- Status for Required Mandatory Quarantine – Person has been in close contact (6 ft.) with someone who is positive, but is not displaying symptoms for COVID-19; or person has traveled to China, Iran, Japan, South Korea or Italy and is displaying symptoms of COVID-19;
- Status for Required Mandatory Isolation – Person has tested positive for COVID-19, whether or not displaying symptoms for COVID-19. LHDs must immediately issue an order for Mandatory Quarantine or Isolation once notified, which shall be served on the person impacted. Given the virulence of COVID-19, we also have precautionary protocols.
- Status Required for Precautionary Quarantine – Person meets one or more of the following criteria: (i) has traveled to China, Iran, Japan, South Korea or Italy while COVID-19 was prevalent, but is not displaying symptoms; or (ii) is known to have had a proximate exposure to a positive person but has not had direct contact with a positive person and is not displaying symptoms.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever or new or worsening respiratory symptoms including cough or shortness of breath. Anyone who feels they may meet the above criteria for quarantine should immediately contact their local health department in the county in which they reside. **If the employee also has symptoms associated with COVID-19, they should be instructed to also immediately call their healthcare provider for further guidance.**

Employers may discuss opportunities for employees to work at home if possible if they require quarantine or isolation as determined by the local health department but are asymptomatic.

Guard Against Stigma:

As new information emerges, please remind your employees that the risk of novel coronavirus is not connected with race, ethnicity or nationality. Stigma will not help to fight the illness. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection.

Sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is one of the best things we can do to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

More information:

New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage:
<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

Listing of Local Health Departments:



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https://www.health.ny.gov/contact/contact_information/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Webpage:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>