

COVID-19 FAQs FOR BUSINESSES

These are questions we frequently receive from businesses and organizations through our COVID-19 call center and the contract tracing process. Much of this information will assist you in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace, and help you understand what steps to take if you have an employee who tests positive for COVID-19 or is exposed to someone who has.

When is quarantine required? Quarantine is required when someone has been in close contact with another person who has COVID-19—excluding people who have had COVID-19 within the past 3 months or who are fully vaccinated and showing no symptoms.

I had all my exposed employees get tested, and they are negative. Can they return to work? Exposed individuals can be tested for COVID-19 on day 5. If they test negative they can be released from quarantine on day 7. If they do not get tested they need to quarantine for 10 days. The incubation period is 14 days, but the chances of developing an illness after 10 days are low based on research done by the CDC. Employers can choose to require a full 14 day quarantine. Individuals who were exposed should still monitor closely for symptoms until 14 days have passed.

How am I supposed to run my business if my staff has to quarantine? We know that these measures are difficult, but as a community we must do what we can to reduce the spread of COVID-19. There are many preventative actions you can take in order to avoid significant disruptions to your operations. These recommendations are location in the "Preventing Spread in the Workplace" section of the toolkit.

How can I avoid mass quarantines which may result in me having to shut down my business? Practicing appropriate physical distancing among staff who is not vaccinated lowers the chance of disruptions to your operations following a COVID-19 exposure. Once those who had close contact with the COVID-19 positive individuals have been identified and sent home, properly sanitize their work spaces. Employees that did not have close contact should still monitor for symptoms, and if you do not have screening procedures in place, consider implementing them.

When can employees come back to work? Exposed individuals who are not fully vaccinated can be tested for COVID-19 on day 5. Testing negative immediately after exposure means that the virus is not yet present in the nose and throat where it replicates and causes symptoms. If they test negative they can be released from quarantine on day 7. If they do not get tested they need to quarantine for 10 days.



Our employee who was sick came into close contact with customers/clients, what do we do? Close contacts do not include infectious people who may walk past you at a place like the grocery store or gas station. In settings like this, there is no action necessary. If a customer or client has had close contact to an employee who has tested positive for COVID-19, you may wish to notify them. We recommend that you only relay the CDC recommendations to avoid unintentional misinformation. We have attached an example phone call script and an email template to assist in making these contacts. We recommend that you notify those that you can verify had close contact. You may also choose to provide them with the supplemental materials in this packet that they can review while they wait for a call from us. If you don't have names or contact information for those individuals, have the employee disclose this information to the Health Department.

Is it okay to tell my staff or customers who tested positive? Due to privacy laws, you are prohibited from sharing the private medical information of your employees without their prior authorization. Even if you are asked by an employee or customer directly about an individual, you should neither confirm nor deny whether that individual is positive for COVID-19.

Can I require proof that the employee is positive or has been exposed? The Health Department will provide all positive individuals and their close contacts with documentation outlining isolation or quarantine guidelines. However, it may take several days for this information to be made available to your employee. If the employee has completed their isolation or quarantine and has not yet heard from the Health Department, they may call 874-1211. Please note: the individual, not their employer, must request this documentation.

Should I require my positive employee to show proof of a negative test before returning to work? No. The Health Department utilizes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) strategy for releasing an individual who tested positive for COVID-19. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate for a minimum of 10 days from when their symptoms started, or if asymptomatic, 10 days from their test date. They may not be released from isolation until there are cleared by the Health Department. After 10 days and 24 hours symptom free, the virus is no longer replicating and the individual is not infectious. However, because tests are not able to differentiate between live and dead virus cells, people may receive a positive test result for up to 6 weeks after the onset of symptoms even though they are no longer ill or infectious.



Can I continue working if I was exposed to COVID-19? In the spring of 2020, the Stay at Home ordinances in Springfield and Greene County identified several types of businesses that were essential and could remain open. However, these businesses do not necessarily fall under the definition of critical infrastructure which might allow employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 to continue working under a modified quarantine. Typically, modified quarantine ONLY applies to first responders and health care workers. If you are exposed to COVID-19, the Health Department will determine if you are eligible for a modified quarantine. If you would like a determination, notify the contact tracer who reaches out to you. PLEASE NOTE: THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19. THERE IS NO MODIFIED ISOLATION. ALL WORKERS WHO TEST POSITIVE MUST ISOLATE.

If I have to isolate or quarantine and working from home is not an option for me, how will I pay my bills? Paid sick leave through the Family First Coronavirus Response Act expired on 12/31/2020. Individuals will need to utilize company paid time off (PTO) or paid sick leave if they have to isolate or quarantine.

