

Employee Exposure & Response

Pandemic Conditions

Director's Interim Procedure, Revised: 03-22-2020

Introduction

With a declaration of a pandemic, additional precautions to avoid the spread of illness in the workplace will be taken. During a declared pandemic, employers can ask additional questions, require additional screenings, or enact protocols aimed at workplace safety and preventing the spread of the illness.

The primary goal during a pandemic is to stop the spread of the illness to others. Employers have a responsibility to keep their workforce safe. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) regulations during a pandemic identify four factors in determining whether an employee poses a direct threat: (1) duration of the risk; (2) nature and severity of the potential harm; (3) the likelihood that potential harm will occur; and (4) the imminence of the potential harm.¹ During a pandemic, employers can take the following actions that are not generally allowed under employment laws and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These steps include²:

- Sending employees home who exhibit influenza-like symptoms at work
- Asking employees exhibiting influenza-like symptoms what symptoms the person is experiencing
- Taking an employee's temperature
- Asking questions about travel, both personal and business, and have the person stay home for the period specified due to the type of illness
- Requiring a fitness to return to work appointment by a healthcare professional
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As COVID-19 has spread in our community, we have learned lessons and more data to make better decisions about containment and mitigation. This SOP may be updated as more information becomes available.

Guidance and Resources

This SOP uses the following guidance and resource material:

- *Center for Disease Control Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Exposures: Geographic Risk and Contacts of Laboratory-confirmed Cases (Updated March 22, 2020).*
 - o *The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (03-22-2020) also approve this CDC guidance.*

¹ https://www.eeoc.gov/facts/pandemic_flu.html

² <https://www.scemployersblog.com/2020/03/covid-19-what-employers-need-to-know-about-permissible-medical-inquiries-and-osha-requirements/>

- *South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) Guidance on the Discontinuation of Isolation and Quarantine & DHEC Guidance on the Management of Healthcare Personnel (HCPs) who are positive for COVID-19 or exposed to COVID-19 patients*

Definitions

Symptoms compatible with COVID-19, for the purpose of these recommendations, include subjective or measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.

Self-observation means people should remain alert for subjective fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop cough or difficulty breathing during the self-observation period, they should take their temperature, self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or tele-health to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

Self-monitoring means people should monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or tele-health to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

Close contact is defined as:

- a) Being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case

OR

- b) Having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on)

Isolation means the separation of a person or group of people known or reasonably believed to be *infected with a communicable disease and potentially infectious* from those who are not infected to prevent spread of the communicable disease. Isolation for public health purposes may be voluntary or compelled by federal, state, or local public health order.

Quarantine in general means the separation of a person or group of people reasonably believed to have been *exposed to a communicable disease but not yet symptomatic*, from others to prevent the possible spread of the communicable disease. This may be used as a precautionary measure by the Center in cases where it is not clear as to the exposure.

Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.

Exposure Risk Management

As the domestic COVID-19 infection situation evolves, the Center will base decisions about application of individual-level monitoring or movement restrictions on the situation in our community. This includes factors such as sustained community transmission and competing community priorities.

Public Safety Telecommunicators fill essential (critical) infrastructure roles within our community. Based on the needs of our community these personnel will continue to work following **POTENTIAL** exposure to COVID-19 (either travel-associated or close contact to a confirmed case) provided they remain asymptomatic (without symptoms).

Employees are encouraged to present their concern of possible exposure.

Employees who are placed under some type of restriction by the Center will be treated with respect, fairness, and compassion.

Restrictions & Actions

The following is a guideline to be used by the Center Director in determining restrictions and/or actions taken:

Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19 Employees:

- Will be considered infectious
- If the employee is able to Work From Home, will be allowed to work if their health allows
- If the employee is not able to Work From Home, will be placed on leave
 - Reference the most current County Leave policy as it relates to the CORONA-19 Pandemic
- Practice *Self-observation* (see *Definitions section of this SOP*)
- Practice *Self-Isolation* (see *Definitions section of this SOP*)
- Return to work if Employee has been hospitalized:
 - COVID-19 patients should be discharged when clinically indicated. If the patient/Employee is ready to be discharged to their home but they have not been cleared from transmission-based precautions, they will need to continue self-isolation after discharge.
 - Will follow appropriate healthcare professional advice provided by their physician regarding return to work.
 - Final authorization to return to work must be received by Concentra (Charleston County contracted health service) for return to normal work duties.
- If Employee has not been hospitalized:
 - The Employee will follow directions (CDC Non-Test-Based Strategy) below to discontinue home isolation.
 - If Symptomatic (with symptoms), patient/Employee must meet the following criteria:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since the resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and,**
 - At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - If Asymptomatic (without symptoms), discontinue home isolation when at least 7 days have passed since the date of the patient's first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test with no subsequent illness.
 - Final authorization to return to work must be received by Concentra (Charleston County contracted health service) for return to normal work duties.

Symptomatic Employees

Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center

- Symptomatic Employees – Charleston County Definition
 - Employees that exhibit symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (*see Definitions section of this SOP*) infection who are under investigation for COVID-19 by a healthcare professional.
 - Employees that exhibit symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (*see Definitions section of this SOP*) infection who have been instructed by a healthcare professional or tele-health to:
 - Practice *Self-observation* (*see Definitions section of this SOP*)
 - Practice *Self-Isolation* (*see Definitions section of this SOP*)
- Return to work
 - The non-test-based strategy will be followed to discontinue home isolation.
 - The Employee must meet the following criteria:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since the resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**,
 - At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - Final authorization to return to work must be received by Concentra (Charleston County contracted health service) for return to normal work duties.

High & Medium Risk Employees:

- High Risk - Charleston County Definition:
 - Living in the same household as, being an intimate partner of, or providing care in a non-healthcare setting (such as a home) for a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection.
- Medium Risk - Charleston County Definition:
 - Travel from a country with sustained community transmission
 - Travel on a cruise ship or river boat
 - Close contact with a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19
- If the employee is able to Work From Home, will be allowed to work from home
 - Reference the most current County Leave policy as it relates to the CORONA-19 Pandemic
- If the employee is not able to Work From Home, will be placed on leave
 - Reference the most current County Leave policy as it relates to the CORONA-19 Pandemic
- Return to work if caring for symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infected person living in the household :
 - The non-test-based strategy will be followed to discontinue home isolation.
 - If the person being cared for is Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19 Symptomatic (with symptoms), Employee must meet the following criteria:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since the resolution of "cared for person's" fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**,
 - At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared in the person being cared for.
 - If the person being cared for is Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19 Asymptomatic (without symptoms), the Employee may discontinue home isolation when at least 7 days have passed since the date of the patient's (person being cared for) first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test with no subsequent illness.

Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center

- Final authorization to return to work must be received by Concentra (Charleston County contracted health service) for return to normal work duties.
- Return to work if travel or close contact pertains:
 - The non-test-based strategy will be followed to discontinue home isolation.
 - If the Employee is Asymptomatic (without symptoms), the Employee may discontinue home isolation when at least 14 days have passed since travel or close contact.
 - Final authorization to return to work must be received by Concentra (Charleston County contracted health service) for return to normal work duties.

Low Risk Employees who are asymptomatic (without symptoms):

- Low Risk - Charleston County Definition:
 - Being in the same indoor environment (e.g., a classroom, a hospital waiting room) as a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time but not meeting the definition of close contact
- Will be allowed to work their normally assigned duties
- Will *Self-monitor* (see *Definitions section of this SOP*)
- Will practice social distancing while in the work place
- May be *Quarantined* (see *Definitions section of this SOP*) to work within the Emergency Services Building, the Public Services Building or other location

No Identifiable Risk Employees who are asymptomatic (without symptoms):

- No Identifiable Risk - Charleston County Definition:
 - Employees that interact with a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection that do not meet any of the high-, medium- or low-risk conditions above, such as walking by the person or being briefly in the same room.
 - This includes Employees who had a POTENTIAL exposure
 - The CDC (03-22-2020) does not recommend testing, symptom monitoring or special management for people exposed to asymptomatic people with potential exposures to COVID-19 (such as in a household), i.e., “contacts of contacts;” these people are not considered exposed to COVID-19.
- Will be allowed to work their normally assigned duties
- *Self-monitor* (see *Definitions section of this SOP*)
- Will practice *Social distancing* (see *Definitions section of this SOP*) while in the work place