

ND SMART GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for essential and non-essential workplaces (other than health care settings) when responding to notification that one or more employees test positive or are close contacts to someone with COVID-19. Separate [guidance for healthcare workers testing positive for COVID-19](#) is available.

Employee Health Screening and When to Exclude Ill Employee(s) from the Workplace

In addition to general employer/employee health policies, businesses should exclude ill employees who meet any of the following three criteria:

- 1) Employee is ill with fever (measured at 100° F or feels feverish) **OR** has any of the following new onset of symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, runny nose, congestion, sore throat, chills, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or loss of sense of taste and/or smell.
- 2) Employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 through diagnostic testing. Employers should inform coworkers and volunteers of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality. The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) will also notify employers when cases in their workplace are reported.
 - a. Employees with confirmed COVID-19 need to be excluded until at least 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms (or 10 days from collection date of positive test if asymptomatic) **AND** the employee has been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications **AND** symptoms are improving.
 - b. The [CDC](#) does not recommend a test-based strategy to determine when to discontinue home isolation, except in certain circumstances when advised by a healthcare provider.
- 3) Potentially exposed coworkers or close contacts, defined as individuals who were within 6 feet of the case for 15 cumulative minutes or longer, should be furloughed and stay at home for 14 days from last exposure to a COVID-19 case (unless both the infected person and the close contact were [consistently and correctly wearing appropriate masks](#) at all times during the potential exposure*). Possible coworker exposure is considered when working in adjacent and shared spaces, such as at the same workstation, counter area, or food line, within 6 feet for 15 cumulative minutes or longer.

Work Practices to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

The NDDoH has developed a [Workplace Assessment for COVID-19](#) (WAC) and provided the following guidance to help business owners, employers, non-profits, and managers make decisions that affect their individual operation while preparing to reopen. Employers are encouraged to use this self-assessment to guide potential best practices for preventing and responding to COVID-19 in the business setting. The WAC is not required to be reviewed or approved by the NDDoH or local public health unit (LPHU). Recognizing that conditions and circumstances change daily, employers may reach out to the NDDoH or LPHU if there are additional questions.

1. COVID-19 case(s) identified in your community, but not in your workplace

Non-essential and essential businesses may continue regular operations and standard operating procedures. Businesses and employers should follow [CDC guidance](#) regarding preparing for COVID-19 AND complete the [Workplace Assessment for COVID-19](#). Guidance includes employee screening methods, monitoring employee sick leave, asking sick employees to stay home, social distancing, ensuring handwashing, environmental cleaning, communicating with customers, etc. When possible, employees should telework.

2. Employee(s) tests positive / COVID-19 case(s) in your workplace

If an employee/volunteer tests positive for COVID-19, the NDDoH will notify your place of work while maintaining the privacy of the case. If the business owner or manager is made aware of a positive COVID-19 employee prior to being contacted by the NDDoH, please **immediately** report the case to the NDDoH at 1-800-472-2180 or 701-328-2378.

Employees with confirmed COVID-19 need to be excluded until

- (1) at least 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms (or 10 days from specimen collection date of positive test if asymptomatic) **AND** the employee has been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications **AND** improvement of symptoms



One employee tested positive OR workplace close contacts report symptoms - Next Steps

- 1) Follow employee exclusion criteria

- 2) Rapidly identify close contacts potentially exposed in the workplace and follow recommended 14-day quarantine*
- 3) Close off areas used by the person who is sick. CDC recommends waiting at least 24 hours before conducting extensive [environmental cleaning](#) in the area. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.



COVID-19 close contact(s) in your workplace

A close contact is defined as a household contact or an individual who was within 6 feet of the case for 15 cumulative minutes or longer. The timeframe for exposure to an infected individual includes the period of time 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic (or tested positive if asymptomatic) and while the individual was contagious (at least 10 days after onset of symptoms or positive test if asymptomatic).

Employees or volunteers who are identified as close contacts or household contacts to a confirmed case of COVID-19 are recommended to quarantine for 14 days from their last exposure to a case, unless both the infected person and the close contact were [consistently and correctly wearing appropriate masks](#) at all times during the potential exposure.* Case workers will assist in identifying close workplace contacts during the initial investigation. Close contacts who develop symptoms should be tested. If positive, the employee must stay home for at least 10 days from symptom onset. Even if close contacts test negative during the 14-day quarantine period*, that does not mean they will not go on to develop COVID-19 during the 14 days after exposure.

Asymptomatic close contacts should be tested 7 to 10 days after last exposure to a COVID-19 case. If an outbreak is occurring in the workplace, testing should occur as soon as possible. Even if close contacts test negative during the 14-day quarantine period, they still may develop COVID-19 during the 14 days after exposure. If the individual receives a negative result, the 14-day quarantine will continue. Close contacts **cannot** test out of quarantine.*

*People who, because of [mask](#) use, are exempted from quarantine should:

- Wear a mask while around others.
- Watch for symptoms for 14 days and be tested if symptom(s) occur.
- Consider being tested 7-10 days after the last exposure.
- Practice social distancing, including avoiding large crowds and gatherings.

ESSENTIAL Workforce Exceptions and Recommendations for COVID-19

This guidance is for people who are essential workers (**excluding healthcare providers**) as defined by the [United States Department of Homeland Security](#).

The North Dakota Department of Health **strongly recommends** that all close contacts of individuals infected with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days past the last day they were in contact with the person who tested positive. The **risk is high** that a close contact of someone with COVID-19 will go on to develop COVID-19. Unless there are critical workforce shortages, close contacts to COVID-19 cases should be quarantined for 14 days.*

CDC published interim guidance for [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#). This guidance offers exceptions for critical infrastructure workers identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case suggesting essential workers may attend work if deemed necessary provided the employer take special precautions including adherence to the [Workplace Assessment for COVID-19](#).

- Employees/volunteers identified as close contacts to a person with COVID-19 and who are considered [critical infrastructure workers](#) may return to work as long as they remain **asymptomatic** and the following safety practices are implemented by the employee and the employer:
 1. Notify: Employees should notify a supervisor and/or occupational health representative of their contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
 2. [Pre-Screen](#): Employers should measure the employee's temperature and assess symptoms prior to their starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility.
 3. Regular Monitoring: As long as the employee doesn't have a fever or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.
 4. [Wear a Mask](#): The employee should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after the last exposure. Employers can issue face masks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
 5. Social Distance: The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
 6. Disinfect and Clean Workspaces: Extensive [environmental cleaning](#) of all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

For additional information, please see the [NDDoH Fact Sheet for Essential Workers](#).

COVID-19 Testing Recommendations at the Workplace

Symptomatic exposed workers should contact their healthcare provider for testing.

Asymptomatic coworkers identified by public health as close contacts are also recommended to be tested. Testing ideally should occur 7-10 days after last exposure to a case. If an outbreak is occurring in the facility, then testing may occur as soon as possible. If positive, the employee must stay home for 10 days from the date of the test. If negative, then the 14-day quarantine should continue.

Additional [testing strategies and recommendations are available for high density critical infrastructure workplaces](#) (i.e., food processing, manufacturing plants).

Additional COVID-19 Links and Resources

[CDC: How to Select, Wear, and Clean Your Mask](#)

[ND Smart Restart Plan](#)

[ND Smart Restart Protocols](#)

[ND Smart Business Pledge](#)

[NDDoH Health Metrics](#)

[List of Free Testing Locations in ND](#)

NDDoH COVID-19 Public Health Hotline: 1-866-207-2880, Monday – Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

NDDoH Fact Sheets

[You Have COVID-19, Now What?](#)

[You Are a Close Contact to a COVID-19 Case, Now What?](#)

[You May Have Been Exposed to COVID-19, Now What?](#)

[Guidance for Quarantine and Mask Use](#)