ND SMART GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS

This document provides 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 Employees

In addition to general employer/employee health policies, businesses should exclude ill employees who meet any of the following 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 new loss of taste or smell.

2) Employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 through diagnostic testing. Employers should work with the case to determine close contacts in the workplace, and inform coworkers of their possible exposure to COVID-19 but maintain confidentiality. The NDDoH no longer notifies employers of cases within the workplace.
   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.

The following options may be used as alternative reduced quarantine periods, with continued symptom monitoring and masking occurring through day 14:
   a. If the close contact remains symptom-free, he/she may be released from quarantine AFTER DAY 10.
   b. If the close contact remains symptom-free and has a negative result from a COVID-19 PCR or antigen test administered within the previous 48 hours of release, he/she may be released from quarantine AFTER DAY 7.
Vaccinated individuals can be exempt from quarantine if they meet ALL the following criteria:

a. Are fully vaccinated (i.e. ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine).

b. Are within 3 months following receipt of the last dose in the series.

c. Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure.

If both the infected person and the close contact were consistently and correctly wearing appropriate masks at all times during the potential exposure, the contact can be exempt from quarantine. People who, because of mask use, are exempt from quarantine should:

a. Wear a mask while around others.

b. Watch for symptoms for 14 days and be tested if symptom(s) occur.

c. Consider being tested 7-10 days after the last exposure.

d. Practice social distancing, including avoiding large crowds and gatherings.

People who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not have to quarantine or get tested again as long as they do not develop new symptoms.

Work Practices to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

The NDDoH developed a Workplace Assessment for COVID-19 (WAC) and the following guidance to help business owners, employers, non-profits, and managers make decisions that affect their individual operation. 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 operations based on their county’s designated risk level per the ND Smart Restart Plan. 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 tests positive / COVID-19 case in your workplace

If an employee/volunteer tests positive for COVID-19, the NDDoH will instruct the case to notify his/her place of work and provide guidance to help the case identify close contacts. Employers should notify workplace close contacts while maintaining confidentiality.

Employees with confirmed COVID-19 must 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.

An 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, 10-day, or 7-day quarantine, unless previously cited quarantine exemptions apply.
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).

If a case worked while he/she was contagious, employers should work with the case to determine close contacts in the workplace. Employers should notify those identified as close contacts to a confirmed case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality. Close contacts are recommended to quarantine for 14, 10, or 7 days from their last exposure to a case, unless previously cited quarantine exemptions apply.
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 quarantine for 14, 10, or 7 days, unless previously cited quarantine exemptions apply. The risk is high that a close contact of someone with COVID-19 will go on to develop COVID-19.

CDC published guidance for COVID-19 Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning. This guidance offers exceptions for critical infrastructure workers identified as close contacts, suggesting essential workers may attend work if deemed necessary provided the employer takes 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 the case 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, testing should occur as soon as possible. If positive, an employee must stay home for 10 days from the date of the test.

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

NDDoH Fact Sheets

You Have COVID-19, Now What?
You Are a Close Contact to a COVID-19 Case, Now What?
You Are a Household Contact to a COVID-19 Case, Now What?
You May Have Been Exposed to COVID-19, Now What?

Guidance for Quarantine and Mask Use

Quarantine Recommendations for Close Contacts Visual Timeline

Additional COVID-19 Links and Resources

COVID-19 Calculator
How to Select, Wear, and Clean Your Mask
ND Smart Restart Plan
ND Smart Restart Protocols
COVID-19 Vaccination Information for Essential Workers
Essential Workers COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit
NDDoH COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs

ND COVID-19 Vaccine Information
ND COVID-19 Vaccine Locator
List of Free Testing Locations in ND
Quarantine Change FAQs

NDDoH COVID-19 Public Health Hotline: 1-866-207-2880, Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
The NDDoH Workplace Subject Matter Expert team is available to provide guidance and can be contacted at dohcovidbusiness@nd.gov or 701-328-2378.