

COVID-19 Interim Guidance for Employers (3/17/2020)

Attention Local Employer:

Please keep in mind this is a rapidly evolving situation and guidance may change as we learn more about the virus.

We are receiving a lot of calls from people who state that their employer is requiring them to be tested for COVID-19 (Coronavirus). There is much we are learning about this new virus, so it is possible these recommendations will change in the future. But based on what we know right now, this is our best advice on how to keep you and your employees healthy and limit the impact of the pandemic.

As you may already know, the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough and shortness of breath. Runny nose, sore throat and sneezing is rare. **If you believe an employee has symptoms of COVID-19, our recommendation is that you send them home.** If they have serious symptoms, they should call their health care provider. If they are not sick enough to seek health care, they should stay home until their symptoms are gone as follows:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**,
- At least 7 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health recommends employers **do not require a health care provider's note to validate the illness or return to work for employees sick with acute respiratory illness.** Health care provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.

In addition, **do not require employees with symptoms to be tested for coronavirus before returning to work.** Current testing guidelines limit who is eligible for testing to the sickest and/or the most at risk of serious illness. An employee with mild symptoms may not need medical care and may not be suitable for testing. Additionally, testing employees who do not have symptoms is not effective, wastes time and valuable resources, and is not an approved use of test kits.

If you have an employee who has been seen by a health care provider and told to stay home for a period of time, we recommend you follow the health care provider's orders.

When a person tests positive for COVID-19, we follow up with them to identify close contacts to recommend self-quarantine. We may also call their employer during the follow-up to reach the contacts and would ask that if we call you that you maintain employee privacy during that time.

Here are some resources for you to navigate this difficult and unprecedented time: CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-businessresponse.html>)