COVID-19 and Businesses
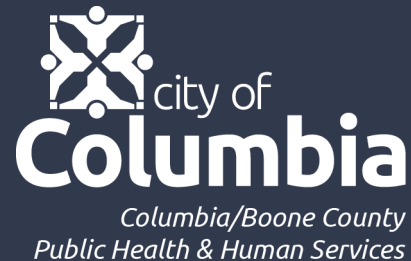
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MISSOURI

COVID-19 Basics

- Primarily spread person-to-person through droplets that can be transmitted when breathing, talking, sneezing, coughing, laughing, singing, etc.
  - This is why social distancing and mask wearing is so important.
- Those who test positive go into home **isolation**.
- Those who are considered a close contacts of a positive case begin to **quarantine**.
    - Close contacts are defined as those within 6 feet of the infected person for more than 15 **cumulative** minutes.

COVID-19 symptoms

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

COVID-19 Testing

- PHHS does not conduct testing, however there are several testing sites around Columbia.
  - These include MU Health, Boone Hospital, and urgent care facilities.
- A doctor's order is required to be tested for COVID-19.
  - Contact your primary care physician (PCP) if you think you should be tested.
- Testing cost varies by site and insurance coverage. Please inquire about testing costs with the testing facility.
- Those who get tested may only be notified if results are positive.
  - Results are typically given within 24-72 hours, but may vary depending on the testing site.

Guidelines for those who test positive

- Isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days.
- Follow the symptom method of being released from isolation (ALL THREE MUST BE MET BEFORE RETURNING TO WORK):
  - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms began, **AND**
  - Fever-free for 24 hours without medicine, **AND**
  - Other symptoms have improved.
- The positive individual DOES NOT need to test negative or a doctor's note before returning to work.

Guidelines for those who are close contacts

- Close contacts (those within 6 ft. of the infectious person for more than 15 **cumulative** minutes) must quarantine for 14 days, even if masks were worn.
  - The 14 day period starts from the last time the contact was around the infectious person. Example: John found out he was a contact on Wednesday but hadn't seen Julie (positive individual) since Saturday. His quarantine began Saturday.
- Close contacts are encouraged to be tested between day 7 and 9 of their quarantine period.
  - Even if they test negative, they must remain in quarantine for the full 14 days as they can become infectious at any time.
- These guidelines apply to all close contacts, except those who are considered critical infrastructure.
- Contacts of contacts (those who have been around someone who is a close contact) do not need to quarantine because they are not considered exposed to the virus. If the close contact you were around later tests positive and was infectious while around you, then you would become a close contact and begin quarantine

Critical infrastructure

- If an employee is considered part of the critical infrastructure of the business and cannot work remotely, they may continue to work in person if they have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus but are not showing symptoms.
- A full list of critical infrastructure is provided by the [Department of Homeland Security.](#) Examples of critical infrastructure include: custodial staff, healthcare workers, police, fire, etc.
- Critical infrastructure employees who have been exposed but remain symptom-free and must return to in-person work should adhere to the following practices before and during their work shift:
  - Pre-screen for symptoms
  - Monitor regularly for symptoms
  - Wear a cloth face covering
  - Practice social distancing
  - Clean and disinfect workspaces
- Employees with symptoms should be sent home and should not return to the workplace until they have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation.

Steps you as an employer can take to keep your staff as safe as possible

1. Modify daily operations to keep employees as spaced as possible (at least 6 feet away from others). This will lessen the amount of close contacts and exposures in the workplace, so that less of your staff need to quarantine if someone were to become positive.
2. Try to keep staff in stable groups and not rotate their job duties. For example, keep all prep cooks as prep cooks, keep all drivers as drivers, etc.
3. Assign someone to make sure all COVID guidelines are being followed.
4. Keep EPA-approved disinfectants on site and use them regularly.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do we do if an employee tests positive?

- The employee should be sent home and begin isolation immediately if they have not already done so.
  - Due to privacy concerns, businesses will only be notified of a possible exposure if their employee has tested positive and PHHS needs to work with the employer to identify other close contacts.
- If the employee informs you they have tested positive and has known close contacts in the workplace, you can notify those individuals before they are contacted by PHHS.
- Disinfect all shared surfaces with EPA-approved products.

Do I have to shut down my business if an employee tests positive?

- No, businesses are not required to shut down if a staff member becomes infected with COVID-19.
- In some cases, if the majority of the staff are identified as a close contact, there may not be enough staff to remain open during the 14-day quarantine period.
- When a business has an employee test positive for the virus, PHHS may contact the business to discuss and educate on appropriate cleaning and disinfection guidelines.

How can we notify staff without causing mass hysteria when an employee has tested positive?

- We have to normalize the virus and know that most people will not have severe symptoms. Understand that people may be scared when they hear a coworker is sick, but prevention and risk management in your business are ways to help people feel like they have done the best they can and are being supported by their employer.
- To prevent hysteria, make sure all recommendations are in place and someone at your business is accountable for making sure protocol is being followed to lessen your chance of being close contacts. PHHS is available to answer your questions.
  - Having relaxed leave policies and sick pay is helpful if people are afraid of the loss in income when quarantining.
  - Make it clear to the rest of the staff that those who were exposed have been notified so that they don't worry further.

Am I required to notify the public that an employee tested positive, or will PHHS notify the public?

- Businesses are not required to notify the public if they have an employee test positive for the virus.
- PHHS will only issue a public health alert if risk of exposure is high and contact tracing is not possible due to the lack of social distancing requirements in the establishment.

When should employees be tested if they are deemed to be a close contact?

- It is recommended that only close contacts of the positive case be tested.
- Close contacts should be tested between 7-9 days after contact with the known case.
- Close contacts must quarantine for the entire 14-day quarantine period, even if their test result is negative, as they can become infectious at any time.

My employee says they are a contact to a positive case but I haven't heard from PHHS. What do I do?

- All close contacts should begin their quarantine period immediately.
- It may take several days for PHHS to identify and get ahold of all close contacts. For that reason, employers are encouraged to immediately notify all close contacts within the workplace.
- All close contacts can be given paperwork from PHHS that identifies them as a close contact that can be given to their employer.

Questions?