COVID-19 in the Workplace

FAQ for Union County Businesses

Working together to protect the communities of Union County. Our goal is to establish strong partnerships and open lines of communication so we can continue to keep our families and neighbors safe as we stay United in Union County.

What do I do if an employee has symptoms of COVID-19?
If an employee is sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, isolate them from other workers immediately and send them home. An ill employee should consult with workplace medical staff or their personal healthcare provider if they have signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Employers should ensure regular cleaning and disinfecting of all work areas and high touch surfaces, with extra cleaning and disinfecting occurring in any area where a sick employee was working.

When do I call the Health Department about an employee with symptoms?
Per the Stay Safe Ohio order, **employers should report confirmed or probable cases** of COVID-19 to the local health department. **Suspected cases are NOT required to be reported** by employers. If you are notified by an employee that they have been diagnosed with COVID-19, please call the Union County Health Department as soon as possible at (937) 642-2053. The employer should provide the name and phone number of the ill employee for contact tracing purposes.

For employees who become sick at work, you only need to report the ill employee to the Health Department if you have reasonable suspicion an employee is ill with COVID-19 as defined as:

- the employee is seeking medical care for COVID-19 like symptoms, or
- onsite medical staff believe symptoms are consistent with COVID-19, or
- the employee was told by a physician they were positive for COVID-19, or
- the employee reports they had contact with a known positive COVID-19 case

What should I expect after I call the Health Department?
We view slowing the spread of COVID-19 as a partnership with each business and individual. We will work with you to identify what other employees or contacts within the workplace are likely at increased risk for exposure to COVID-19. We will ask you to provide a list of these close contacts which includes their names, phone numbers, addresses and county of residence (if known). We will discuss which employees may need to be quarantined and what employees can continue working. We will discuss what cleaning and disinfecting has occurred and what is recommended. We will also provide educational materials you can post in your workplace or otherwise provide to your employees as deemed appropriate by the employer.

If not by the employer, how is the health department notified about a COVID-19 case?
Per Ohio law, labs and healthcare providers must report clinically probable cases and laboratory confirmed cases to the Health Department within 24 hours. However, reporting errors or time lapses can occur as data is entered into the Ohio Disease Reporting System. It is possible an employer may be made aware of a case of COVID-19 by the ill person before the diagnosis is reported to the Union County Health Department.

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

People with COVID-19 report a wide range of symptoms with mild to severe illness.

Symptoms may start 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.

Symptoms may include:
Cough
Shortness of breath / Difficulty breathing
Fever
Chills
Muscle Pain
Sore Throat
New loss of taste or smell

Other symptoms are possible but less common

UNION COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Will an employer be notified of positive COVID-19 cases in their workplace?
The Union County Health Department will notify employers located within Union County if we receive a report of a clinically diagnosed probable case or lab confirmed case of COVID-19 among one of their employees. The ill employee is also asked to notify their employer as a redundant measure to ensure the employer is notified as promptly as possible.

We will NOT notify the employer if the ill employee did not have contact with the workplace while considered contagious. We will only notify the employer if there is an increased risk to the employer and fellow employees.

If the employer is located outside of Union County, the Union County Health Department will provide the information to the local health department in the jurisdiction of the employer for follow up as appropriate.

Will I have to close if I have an employee or customer with COVID-19?
Not necessarily. Cleaning, quarantine, and other factors will be considered. A business is certainly welcome to make the decision to close for the safety of their employees, customers and business as a whole. The Union County Health Department will work with each employer to complete a risk assessment and determine the breadth of quarantine needed. The business must also perform thorough cleaning and disinfecting, which may necessitate the business closing for a short period of time.

If someone in my workplace has COVID-19, will all my staff be quarantined?
Quarantine and isolation will only be used by the Health Department if there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19. Often, not every employee will need to be quarantined. The Health Department will work with you to complete a risk assessment to determine which employees are considered "close contacts" and thus at increased risk for exposure. Employees are considered close contacts if they have been within six feet of the ill person for a prolonged period of time. Time and proximity are looked at during the 48 hours prior to the ill person having symptoms up until the risk assessment. Employees who are considered close contacts will be quarantined at home for 14 days from last known contact with the ill person.* All other employees can continue to work and are not required to quarantine, but should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days.

If employees are critical infrastructure workers per CDC guidance, they may continue to work if considered a close contact as long the employee has no symptoms. If a critical infrastructure worker who is a close contact develops symptoms of COVID-19, they cannot report to work. If they develop symptoms while at work, they should immediately be isolated from other employees and sent home.

This CDC guidance pertains to critical infrastructure workers, including personnel in 16 different sectors of work including: Federal, state, & local law enforcement; 911 call center employees; Fusion Center employees; Hazardous material responders from government and the private sector; Janitorial staff and other custodial staff; Workers – including contracted vendors – in food and agriculture, critical manufacturing, informational technology, transportation, energy and government facilities.

BEST PRACTICES

Take steps now to help your business quickly respond to COVID-19 in the workplace. These steps help protect workers, customers and minimize the impact on businesses.

Keep sick employees home.

Promote social distancing. Put up signs, tape off markers, eliminate gathering areas, do business by appointment.

Encourage handwashing and hand sanitizer.

Stagger staff and adjust work schedules to limit the number of staff exposed.

Limit vendors and visitors; require a self-health check.

Establish single-person work areas; install physical barriers when not possible.

Schedule frequent cleaning and disinfecting of work areas, shared equipment and spaces, and high touch surfaces like kiosks, door handles, etc.

Masks for employees unless contraindicated; recommend masks for customers.

UNION COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

What does contact tracing look like for employees?
If an employee has been identified as a close contact with a known COVID-19 case, they will become part of the Health Department's contact tracing investigation. They will be contacted by a member of the Union County Health Department's contact tracing team and their exposure risk determined. If their exposure risk poses a threat of illness, the contact will be asked to self-quarantine and monitor for symptoms. Self-quarantine means staying home and away from healthy individuals for 14 days from last exposure to the ill person.* Monitoring consists of the individual taking their temperature twice a day and doing a daily symptom review. The Health Department connects with the individual once a day to review the symptom monitoring and address any needs the individual has during the quarantine period. This quarantine period lasts for 14 days from the last day of exposure to the COVID-19 case. This may be done through a text message or a phone conversation with a Health Department team member.

There are exceptions which allow essential and critical infrastructure workers who are considered close contacts to continue to work if they have no symptoms. However, the decision for quarantined workers to come to work in essential or critical infrastructure workplaces should be made by the employer with the knowledge of risks associated with pre-symptomatic spread to other employees.

Will there be a public notice that my business had a case of COVID-19?
It depends, but in most instances no. If an employee who is a confirmed or clinically probable case of COVID-19 was actively symptomatic (such as coughing on individuals and unmasked), we would want to follow up with customers. If the ill employee's interaction with customer(s) was within six feet for a prolonged time, then customer(s) could be considered close contacts that need to be notified, quarantined and monitored by the Health Department.

When available, customer logs (or appointments books) can help narrow down those customers who were exposed from those that were not. If the customer log contains date, times, name and phone number the likelihood of a public disclosure of the investigation remains low. If a log is not available, a business may be asked to release a public notice indicating a possible time of exposure to a known case.

When can an employee with COVID-19 return to work?
A healthcare provider or the Health Department determines when someone can be released from isolation. Per CDC guidelines, someone who was ill with COVID-19 can discontinue home isolation and return to work if:

- it has been at least 10 days since symptoms began, AND
- they have been fever-free without using medication for at least 72 hours, AND
- other symptoms have improved

If the individual is an essential employee, they may be able to return to work sooner than the above. (CDC Criteria for Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/return-to-work.html)

When can an employee who was quarantined as a close contact return to work?
An employee who was determined to be a close contact of a case of COVID-19 will need to quarantine at home for 14 days from last known exposure to the ill person. If they do not develop any symptoms of COVID-19 during this quarantine period, they can return to work. If they develop symptoms of COVID-19, they will be instructed to self-isolate. Self-isolation means remain at home until fever-free for at least 72 hours without the aid of medication AND their other symptoms have improved AND it has been at least 10 days since their symptoms began.

How do you clean the establishment?
Per the Stay Safe Ohio order and sector specific requirements for businesses, thorough and frequent cleaning and disinfecting are required. Follow the CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting before and after a case of COVID-19 is identified in your workplace. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html