

When an Employee Tests Positive for COVID-19

A Quick Response Plan for Employers

The likelihood that one of your employees will test positive for COVID-19 after returning to the office is very possible. Ensuring leaders are prepared for such a situation is critical to the health and safety of your entire organization. Employers should act immediately and comply with all applicable laws once you have learned that an employee has tested positive for the Coronavirus.

Below are some key steps to follow if or when you receive this call.

1. Above all maintain confidentiality around co-workers.
2. Provide resources for stress management and emotional support as well as details to any other programs offered through the workplace such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Testing positive for a disease that has taken the lives of thousands can create a great deal of anxiety.
3. Ask them to quarantine for the suggested 14 days. If working remote is possible, this would be a good time to discuss what that looks like.
4. Explain the company's policy regarding COVID-19. If you don't a policy yet, get one created as soon as possible and preferably before employees return to the office.
5. Provide information on available vacation and sick leave options, specifically the enhanced paid sick leave offered by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.
6. Have the employee identify their activity in the 14 days prior to testing positive—where they have been and who they have been in close contact with—using the "6-15-48" zone.
7. Advise the employee to contact their medical provider if they haven't already and tested at a community testing site. In this situation, it is advisable to request a confirmation of a positive test once the employee has been in touch with their personal doctor. It doesn't happen often but the possibility exists that the results were incorrect or misinformed.
8. Once confirmed, notify employees, visitors and or customers who were in the office anytime within the last 14 days using the "Sample Communication Regarding Infection in the Workplace" letter. Maintaining confidentiality is critical.
9. Instruct any employees who were in close contact to work from home if possible, for 14 days and to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 using the [online self-checker](#) offered by the Center for Disease and Control (CDC).
10. Follow CDC guidelines to clean and disinfect any area in the workplace in which the employee spent time. CDC also recommends opening doors and windows to ventilate for as long as practical before and after cleaning.
11. If it is possible that the employee contracted the virus at work, you should notify the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
12. Keep in close contact with the infected employee—call regularly to check in and offer emotional support. Some employees may have a harder time than others—worse symptoms, other family members who are also infected. Any support will go a long way in helping the employee through this difficult time.
13. Ensure your policies are up to date by continually monitoring the CDC and OSHA websites for new guidelines which are being issued regularly.