

**Phase Two Guidance**  
**Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): First Steps for Non-Healthcare Employers when Employees Test Positive for COVID-19**

This guidance provides instruction on steps employers can take if someone with COVID-19 reports having visited or worked in their establishment and recommended steps to help decrease the risk of spread of COVID-19 in their establishment while awaiting contact from DC Health. Prompt action by employers may also lessen the need for business closures.

Employers should encourage employees to report a diagnosis of COVID-19 to them as soon as possible. To ensure a clear and efficient process for communication, employers must designate a point of contact at the business that an employee can notify if they test positive for COVID-19 and choose to disclose this information. This person may also serve as a point of contact for communication with DC Health (or employers may designate another person for this role).

This guidance is a companion document for business-specific guidance, which can be found at [coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo). Please refer to those documents for specific requirements that must be followed in Phase Two in order to operate in DC. **This guidance is intended for non-healthcare employers.**

**Definitions:**

**Close contact:** Someone who was within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period, while that person was infectious.

**Infectious period:** The time period during which someone is infectious, or able to spread their infection to others. The infectious period for COVID-19 starts two days before symptom onset and typically ends 10 days after symptom onset (or test date for people who do not have symptoms).

**Incubation period:** The time period between when someone is exposed to an infectious agent and when the first symptoms may appear. The incubation period is different for every pathogen. The incubation period for COVID-19 can be as little as 2 day and as long as 14 days.

**Quarantine:** The process of separating individuals who have been exposed to an infectious agent (like COVID-19) before they develop symptoms of infection or test positive for infection, for the duration of time that covers the incubation period for the pathogen. Quarantine is a powerful tool for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

- **For COVID-19, quarantining for 14 days is the safest option.** However, ending quarantine after 10 days may be acceptable. For information on reduced quarantine periods, see *Quarantine after COVID-19 Exposure at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)*.

**First Steps for Employers**

- Employers should gather the following information:
  - The employee's job role at the business
  - The date of symptom onset (or positive test date if the employee has an asymptomatic infection)
  - When the employee was last physically present at the business

- If the employee was **not at the establishment during their infectious period**, the risk of exposure is minimal, and no further steps are necessary other than continuing everyday precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- If the employee was confirmed to be there during their infectious period and meets the requirements per the DC Health facility-specific guidelines, employers should immediately report the case to DC Health.
- While awaiting outreach from DC Health, employers should review the COVID-19 positive employee's schedule over the past week and obtain information to share with DC Health:
  - The first and last name of the employee
  - The best contact phone number for the employee
  - The state of residence of the employee
    - Even if the COVID-19 positive employee is not a DC resident, the business still needs to report the case to DC Health as per establishment specific guidelines (DC Health will share information with the employee's state of residence).
  - The physical areas at the business location where the COVID-19 positive employee had been during their infectious period
  - If the COVID-19 positive employee was in close contact with others (e.g., staff or clients) while in the establishment during their infectious period
  - The best contact phone number for the close contacts
  - The state of residence of the close contacts
- Employers should inform the COVID-19 positive employee that DC Health will be contacting them and to respond to the calls.
  - DC Health may contact the **business** and the positive **employee**. The positive employee may receive calls from both the [DC Contact Trace Force](#) and the epidemiology team.
- Employers must **notify other employees** about the positive COVID-19 case at the business. **The notification must not identify the COVID-19 positive employee.** The information shared with other employees must include:
  - Education about COVID-19, including the signs and symptoms of COVID-19;
  - Referral to the *Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19*, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance);
  - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District of Columbia, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/testing).
- Employers may instruct any identified *possible* close contacts of the COVID-19 positive employee to stay home from work and quarantine at home until DC Health's investigation is complete. DC Health will either confirm them as a close contact and give guidance on duration of quarantine, or determine they were not a close contact.
  - Once DC Health's follow-up process to identify close contacts is complete, this information will be shared with the point of contact at the business.
  - Please note that only those identified as close contacts will receive a follow-up call from DC Health.
- Employers must **clean and disinfect** the areas at the business where the COVID-19 positive employee has been. Please follow *Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfection* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo).
  - **NOTE:** If more than 7 days have passed since the COVID-19 positive employee has been at the business location, no special cleaning and disinfection is necessary. Continue routine cleaning and disinfection protocols for the business.

- This process can help employers make more immediate decisions about the need to take temporary precautions, such as closure of certain areas of the business if a COVID-19 case was reported.

### Reporting to DC Health

- **Refer to appropriate guidance for your setting for reporting instructions.** All DC Health guidance documents can be found at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).
- Notify DC Health by submitting an online form on the DC Health COVID-19 Reporting Requirements website [dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements](https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements):
  - Submit a **Non-Healthcare Facility COVID-19 Consult Form**.

### Instructions for Return to Work:

#### Confirmed COVID-19 cases:

Employees with **confirmed COVID-19** must only return to work after:

- **At least 10 days** have passed since their symptoms first started  
**AND**
- At least 24 hours after their fever resolves without medication  
**AND**
- Their other symptoms have improved.
- Employees who tested positive but never had symptoms may only return after completing 10 days of self-isolation after the date of their positive COVID-19 test.
- Persons who experienced **severe illness or who are severely immunocompromised** may have to isolate for up to 20 days after their symptoms first started or after their positive test result, in consultation with their healthcare provider.

#### Close contacts:

- Businesses located in DC must follow DC Health guidelines.
- Employees who are a **close contact** of a person confirmed to have COVID-19 may return to work after completion of their quarantine period.
  - Quarantining for 14 days after the date of their last exposure is the safest option, however staff **may return after completing 10 days** of self-quarantine as long as they have remained asymptomatic during their quarantine, and continue to monitor for symptoms for the duration of their 14-day incubation period.
  - For more information on reduced quarantine periods, see *Quarantine after COVID-19 Exposure* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)
- Please note:
  - It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that employees are notified of exposures and are allowed to complete their isolation and quarantine periods.
  - Employers should not require a negative COVID-19 test for an employee to return to work.
- For additional information, please see *Guidance for Persons Who Tested Positive for COVID-19* and *Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo).

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov) regularly for the most current information.