



The Right Way to Handle a Positive COVID-19 Case at Work

Checklists, templates and more
for the first 48 hours.

Your employee tests positive for COVID-19. What do you do?

As Colorado re-opens its economy, employers must be prepared to handle a potential rise in COVID-19 cases. This means knowing what to do if an employee* tests positive, or if an employee has been exposed to someone who has COVID-19. Even though employers may be hoping for the best, it is best to have a plan for the worst.

Here are **three** steps to follow:

Step 1: Take immediate action.

Step 2: Minimize the spread.

Step 3: Offer support.

Bonus content: Guidelines for returning to work.

** [Separate guidelines have been created by the CDC](#) for those who work in critical infrastructure (e.g. healthcare) or those with “high-value human assets (e.g. military) where introduction of COVID-19 could cause major disruptions or reduce national security. This content was curated to inform guidelines for non-critical workers.*

01: Take immediate action

If an employee has confirmed a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, or presumes they have the disease, take these steps **immediately**.

A first things first checklist:

- Immediately send home the employee** who has a confirmed/presumptive case of COVID-19.
- Take action with empathy.** The employee is likely anxious even if symptoms may be mild.
Sample script: “I know that this is a scary thing to deal with. I understand that you may not be able to work for a little while or that your productivity may go down. Don’t worry about that, I understand.”
- Encourage them to seek immediate medical advice** from their healthcare provider to determine whether testing or self-quarantining or other next steps are appropriate.
- Designate a separate area** where they can wait for transport to their home or to medical care.
- Designate a point of contact** with whom they should communicate any updates with.
- Connect with your HR partner. You’ll want to utilize their support and guidance.**
- Ask the employee to identify co-workers/vendors** they’ve come into “close contact” (within 6 feet) for a prolonged period of time (10-30 minutes depending on the interaction) in the last 14 days, according to the CDC. Make a full list.
- Communicate potential exposure to “close contact” employees** (or third parties) but DO NOT identify the name of the affected employee. Expect a lot of questions. Stick to the facts.
- Inform and send home any individuals who came into close contact** with the affected employee. Advise them to self-quarantine for a 14-day period.
Sample script: “Someone in our workplace has tested positive for Covid-19, and they have identified you as a close contact according to the CDC definition. We are here to support you. If you are at work, please prepare to leave as quickly as you can. Once you get home, find a place to self-isolate, monitor yourself for any symptoms, and talk to your doctors.”
- Consider informing all employees.** Respect the confidentiality of the affected employees and simply state the facts.
Sample script: “The person tested positive on a certain date and is now self-isolating. The close contacts have been told and were asked to leave the workplace and self-isolate. If you were not already told you were a close contact, then you are not one. If you have questions about Covid-19 or your situation please call your doctor and look at the CDC website. The company is here to support everyone during this difficult time, and we all send our best wishes to the people affected.”
- Provide the employees with information on sick leave and other applicable benefits** (e.g. local/federal benefits such as TDI and COVID-19 related absences under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act – see page 6)
- Inform building management** so they can take disinfecting precautions they deem necessary.
- Remind all managers and employees** of COVID-19 safe work policies and best practices.
- Thoroughly disinfect the workplace** according to CDC guidelines.



Important HR Reminders:

- **Do not identify the name of affected employees.** Keep health information confidential, per the ADA, HIPPA, and other state laws.
- During a pandemic, the **ADA permits employers to ask all employees physically entering the workplace** if they have COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19, or if they have been tested for COVID-19. If the answer is “yes” to any of these questions, the employer may prevent the employee from entering the workplace since doing so will pose a direct threat to the health or safety of him/herself or others.
- If an employee is confirmed positive for COVID-19 while performing a work-related duty, **you may need to indicate such an incident on your OSHA Form 300 log.** If you’re an Obsidian HR client, please seek advice from one of our safety experts to determine if the incident must be recorded.
- There is **no requirement for employers to notify either the CDC** or any state’s department of health to inform them of the positive diagnosis of an employee.

Sample Announcement to Employees:

Hello We learned [today] that one of our employees has tested positive for/contracted COVID-19. The person who tested positive on [date] is now [self-isolating]. [Identify the area(s) where and the date(s) when the employee frequently worked].

Due to privacy laws, we cannot identify the employee who tested positive for the virus. However, we have gathered the names of those employees or others that worked in close proximity (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) of the employee and have been advised to leave the workplace and seek medical advice from their healthcare provider on next steps. If you were not already told you were in close contact, then you have not worked in close proximity with the employee.

At [Company Name], the health and well-being of our employees is paramount. Out of an abundance of caution, we are closing the [Location] office on [Dates]. While the office is closed, we will clean and disinfect the [Location] office. All [Location] employees with remote work capabilities are expected to work from home while the office is closed. Each employee should consult with their manager for additional instructions.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact [Company Contact]. The company is here to support everyone during this difficult time, and we all send our best wishes to the people affected. You may also check the [CDC COVID-19 website](#) for additional information, and also check out [Colorado’s health department website](#).

Thank you,

02: Sanitize the workplace

Clean and disinfect any area of the workplace in which the affected employee (or “close contacts”) spent time in.

Pre-cleaning checklist:

- **Educate workers** performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 and provide instruction about what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus.
- **Develop policies for worker protection and provide training to all cleaning staff** on site prior to providing cleaning tasks. Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.
- **Ensure workers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals** used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA’s Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200](#)).
- **Comply with OSHA’s standards** on Bloodborne Pathogens ([29 CFR 1910.1030](#)), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and PPE ([29 CFR 1910.132](#)).

Cleaning & Disinfecting checklist:

- Close off areas** used by the affected persons.
- Open outside doors** and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- If possible, **wait up to 24 hours** before beginning cleaning and disinfection to reduce exposure to respiratory droplets in the air.
- Clean and disinfect all areas** used by the affected employee.
- Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces** like tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.
- Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks** in the cleaning process, including handling the trash, and wash hands often for 20 seconds for longer.
- Additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary** if more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility.
- Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be **opened for use**.
- Continue routine cleaning and disinfection**, which includes everyday practices that businesses and communities normally use to maintain a healthy environment.
- For more info, read the CDC’s guidelines for [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).**



Cleaning with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces. Here is a [list of disinfectants](#) that meet the EPA’s criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

03: Offer support

Remember, it's a scary situation for employees too. Listen to their concerns and share practical advice they can do while they seek medical advice on next steps.

Remind employees to...

- Close off areas** used by the affected persons. Stay home. Go outside only to seek medical care.
- Have groceries, meals or medication dropped off** by family, friends or delivery services.
- Stay in a specific room** if possible and separate from others in their household.
- Avoid sharing** personal household items.
- Wear a cloth mask** that covers their nose and mouth.
- Check their temperature** at least two times a day.
- Clean hands** and high-touch **surfaces** often.
- Take care** of themselves with over-the-counter medicine and by staying hydrated.
- Seek medical immediate attention** if they have trouble breathing, persistent chest pain/pressure, new confusion or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face.



Share benefits information with employees...

Don't forget! Make sure to communicate the pay policies and other company benefits to the affected employee and close contacts. If they do not use available paid leave benefits provided by your company, they may be eligible to take advantage of these additional paid leave benefits:

	Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)	Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI)
COVID-19 Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees employed by a company less than 500 employees • Employees who have been employed for at least 30 days prior to their leave request may be eligible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a minimum of 20 hours for the 14 weeks in the previous four completed calendar quarters. • Contraction or self-quarantine cannot be because of a work-related injury. • Cannot be receiving UI or WC benefits.
Benefit Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 hours of sick leave, regardless of whether or not the employee has accrued sick leave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% of your average weekly wages • A maximum of \$650 per week
How to File	An employee should complete and submit a request form with their supervisor/HR manager as soon as possible.	The "Claim for Disability Benefits" form (Form TDI-45) is not available online. Employees can ask their employer for a claim form or contact the state.
Resources	Required FFCRA Poster	Colorado Department of Labor and Employment: OnwardCO

Bonus Content:

Return to Work Guidelines

When can your staff return to work and do so as safely as possible? Based on their health status, here are various scenarios where your employees may be able to come back to work.

	Unconfirmed COVID-19	Confirmed COVID-19
With Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 3 days have passed since recovery, with no fever for a minimum of 72 hours. Have no abnormal temperature for 72 hours without the use of any fever-reducing medicines. Respiratory symptoms have improved 10 days have passed since the beginning of any symptoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 3 days have passed since their recovery, with no abnormal fever for a minimum of 72 hours. Have no significant temperature for 72 hours without the use of any fever-reducing medicines. Respiratory symptoms have improved. No continuing illness: the employee exhibits no symptoms of COVID-19. The employee has had 2 confirmed negative COVID-19 tests, administered by a medical professional and spaced at least 24 hours apart.
Without Illness	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After at least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 test They have not become ill. For an additional 3 days after they end isolation, they continue to limit contact (stay 6 feet away) with others. They wear a mask or other covering of their nose and mouth to limit the potential of dispersal of respiratory secretions.
Requiring Hospitalization	N/A	<p>The CDC recommends a test-based strategy before returning high-risk and hospitalized employees to work. Employees with conditions that might weaken their immune system may have “prolonged viral shedding after recovery.” The CDC recommends these employees discuss returning to work with their personal healthcare provider to best assess if they pose no threat to coworkers. This may include re-testing to verify they are no longer shedding the virus. Businesses should consider each of these staff members on a case-by-case basis, requiring verified testing and return to work authorizations from the worker’s healthcare professional.</p>

Want to talk to an expert?

Schedule a 15-minute consult at obsidianhr.com



How does Obsidian HR help?

Obsidian HR is the state's leader in HR management. We give local employers access to payroll services, benefits, WC/TDI, HR training and compliance support that make it easier to run a business through the ups and downs.

With Obsidian HR, your business can get guidance on new COVID-19 rules and regulations like:

- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES)
- The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
- The Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)

Plus, your business can get local support when you need it the most.

Get more COVID-19 tips and advice for your business at obsidianhr.com