



Guidelines for Addressing Employee Exposure to Covid-19

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Introduction

Bulloch County is working to protect the health and safety of its employees and the public by following COVID-19 guidance from Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). To assist with this effort, this document was prepared as a reference for addressing illness and exposure among Bulloch County employees. It is intended as a guide to help determine what actions should be taken in a variety of employee illness and exposure scenarios.

These guidelines are general handling practices for common situations but do not constitute required actions. Nuances specific to the situation, changes in CDC and DPH guidance, and other variables may impact the response. Bulloch County's handling in any given situation does not replace or supersede the DPH contact tracing process or any other directives of local, state or federal agencies, nor is it intended to replace or override the advice of any employee's medical provider(s).

This document contains:

- **Scenario Chart** - This chart includes multiple example scenarios and guidance on when an employee can return to work following illness or exposure. Medical documentation is not generally required for employee absences related to COVID-19 or to allow employees to return to work from those absences. However, employees may provide such documentation to the Human Resources Department if available. Medical advice that varies significantly from the guidelines in this chart should be documented and provided to HR.
- **Definitions** – All terms shown in **bold** within the Scenario Chart are defined or explained in this section.
- **Q & A** – Additional questions and answers about COVID-19 in the workplace are included here. This section addresses employee notifications in the event a coworker tests positive, return-to-work documentation, and more.
- **Resources** – This section is provided to help locate additional information. It includes links to CDC and DPH websites as well as internal resources.

Note: *The scenarios and guidelines in this document apply to non-healthcare personnel only.*

	Scenario	Should Employee Work?*	Notify HR?	Other Notes**
A	Employee has tested positive for COVID-19 but has no COVID-19 symptoms	No. Employee should stay home and monitor symptoms . If employee remains asymptomatic , he/she can return 10 days after testing. If employee develops symptoms , he/she must continue to stay home until: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) At least 10 days have passed since symptoms began; and 2) Fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication); and 3) Other symptoms have improved. 	Yes	EPSL may apply.
B	Employee is sick with COVID-19 symptoms but has not been tested	No. Employee should stay home until: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) At least 10 days have passed since symptoms began; and 2) Fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication); and 3) Other symptoms have improved. Employee should consider being tested. If tested, employee should stay home until the results are received, then follow Scenario D or Scenario E, depending on test results.	Yes	EPSL may apply.
C	Employee is sick with COVID-19 symptoms , has been tested, but has not received the results	No. Employee should stay home until test results are received, then follow Scenario D or Scenario E, depending on test results.	Yes	EPSL may apply.
D	Employee is sick with COVID-19 symptoms , has been tested, test result was <u>negative</u>	Employee may return to work following negative test if symptoms have resolved and at least 24 hours have passed without fever.	Yes	EPSL may apply.
E	Employee is sick with COVID-19 symptoms , has been tested, test result was <u>positive</u>	No. Employee should stay home until: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) At least 10 days have passed since symptoms began; and 2) Fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication); and 3) Other symptoms have improved. 	Yes	EPSL may apply. Employee not required to take a second test before returning to work.

	Scenario	Should Employee Work?*	Notify HR?	Other Notes**
F	Employee has been in close contact with someone who shows symptoms but who has not been tested	Employee can continue to work and self-monitor symptoms daily. (However, may be taken out of work if advised by a physician to quarantine .)	No (unless advised by doctor to quarantine)	Critical infrastructure exception may apply. EPSL may apply.
G	Employee has been in close contact with someone who shows symptoms but is still awaiting test results	Employee can continue to work and self-monitor symptoms daily. (However, may be taken out of work if advised by a physician to quarantine .)	No (unless advised by doctor to quarantine)	Critical infrastructure exception may apply. EPSL may apply.
H	Employee has been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19	No. Employee must stay home for 14 days after last contact with person and can return after quarantine if no symptoms have arisen. If symptoms appear, employee should stay home until: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) At least 10 days have passed since symptoms began; and 2) Fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication); and 3) Other symptoms have improved. 	Yes	Employee may not return to work until the full 14-day quarantine is complete, even if a negative test is received during this time. Critical infrastructure exception may apply. EPSL may apply.
I	Employee lives with someone who tested positive for COVID-19	No. Employee must self- quarantine for 14 days, as follows: If the sick person is isolated and has no additional further contact with the employee, the employee will quarantine for 14 days from the day the person with COVID-19 began isolation . If the employee has continued contact with the COVID-19 positive person, the employee will quarantine for 14 days from the day the person with COVID-19 ends isolation . If another member of the household tests positive or becomes sick with COVID-19, the quarantine dates will start over.	Yes	Employee may not return to work until the full 14-day quarantine is complete, even if a negative test is received during this time. Critical infrastructure exception may apply. EPSL may apply.

	Scenario	Should Employee Work?*	Notify HR?	Other Notes**
J	Employee is a close contact to someone who has been exposed to another COVID-19 positive person	Employee can continue to work and self-monitor symptoms daily.	No	N/A
K	Employee lives with someone who has been exposed to another COVID-19 positive person	Employee can continue to work and self-monitor symptoms daily.	No	N/A

* The return-to-work guidelines in this chart assume that the COVID-19 illness or infection was mild or moderate. For those who are severely immunocompromised or who experienced severe or critical illness (i.e., were hospitalized for shortness of breath, pneumonia, respiratory failure, or similar conditions caused by COVID-19), a longer period of isolation will be required.

** Please consult the HR Department if EPSL is indicated, to ensure leave is established and processed.

Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions apply:

Asymptomatic: Showing no symptoms.

Close Contact: Any of the following, if occurred during the period beginning 48 hours from the time the other individual's symptoms began or, if no symptoms, date of the individual's positive test result:

- Being within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes
- Providing care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- Having direct physical contact with a person with COVID-19 (touched, hugged, or kissed them)
- Sharing eating or drinking utensils with a person with COVID-19
- The person with COVID-19 sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you

The 15 minutes of exposure need not be continuous (for example, 3 periods of 5 minutes will also be considered close contact). The analysis of close contact is made without regard to the use of masks or other personal protective equipment.

Critical Infrastructure Exception: Both CDC and DPH allow critical infrastructure employees to continue working following COVID-19 exposure, provided certain requirements are met. The supervisor, department head, and/or HR Department will advise an exposed employee if he/she is to continue working under this exception.

EPSL: Emergency Paid Sick Leave, as defined in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. For absences through December 31, 2020, up to 80 hours of EPSL is available in several circumstances, including but not limited to:

- observing quarantine pursuant to federal, state or local order;
- observing quarantine following the advice of a health care provider;
- exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a diagnosis;
- caring for an individual subject to quarantine.

Isolation: Separating a person with COVID-19 from people who are not sick. Isolation can end when all the following criteria are met:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms began; and
- Fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication); and
- Other symptoms have improved.

Those who experienced severe to critical illness or who are severely immunocompromised will require longer periods of isolation.

Self-monitor: Employees assessing their own physical conditions to monitor for COVID-19 symptoms. If any COVID-19 symptoms develop, employee must immediately notify supervisor and go/stay home.

Symptoms: Signs of possible/potential COVID-19 illness include, but are not limited to:

- Fever (100.4°F or feeling feverish); chills
- Cough; sore throat
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- Muscle pain; headache; body aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Fatigue
- Nausea; vomiting; diarrhea
- Congestion; runny nose

Quarantine: Separating and restricting the movement of a person exposed, via close contact, to COVID-19, in case they become sick. Most people must begin quarantine when they find out about their exposure and can end their quarantine 14 days after the last time they were with the person who has COVID-19. (In addition to workplace quarantine directives, quarantine is required by Georgia DPH Administrative Order.)

Questions and Answers

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, will that employee's coworkers be notified?

Once Bulloch County learns of a COVID-19 positive employee, an analysis will be conducted to determine what notifications should be made. For privacy reasons, employees should not expect to be provided the name of a coworker who tested positive. However, employees who work in proximity with that individual will be given a general notice that a positive case has been identified so that all employees in the work group can **self-monitor**. In addition, any employee known to have been in **close contact** with that individual will be notified separately and taken out of work to **quarantine** (unless expected to continue working under the **critical infrastructure exception**).

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, does his/her building have to be shut down?

In most cases, no. Depending on how recently the employee was in the facility, some additional cleaning and disinfecting may need to be done and some part(s) of the facility may need to be closed off briefly.

Once an employee tests positive for COVID-19, is he/she required to obtain a negative test result before returning to work?

No. Both the CDC and DPH recommend using a **symptom**-based strategy, not testing, to determine when an employee can return to work. Generally, an employee who was sick with COVID-19 can return to work when all the following occur:

- 1) At least 10 days have passed since **symptoms** began; and
- 2) Fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication); and
- 3) Other **symptoms** have improved.

An employee who tested positive but was **asymptomatic** can return to work 10 days after testing.

Does a COVID-19 positive employee need a clearance letter from DPH before returning to work?

No.

Does a COVID-19 positive employee need a doctor's note or other medical clearance before returning to work?

Generally, no. Employees will be advised if clearance is needed for their specific situation. However, if documentation about work status or return-to-work clearance is available, employees are encouraged to provide it to the Human Resources Department. This document is not intended to replace or supersede the advice of an employee's medical professional. Any medical advice that varies significantly from the guidelines in this chart should be documented and provided to HR.

What if an employee had COVID-19 and then was exposed a second time? Is quarantine required?

Maybe not. If the employee recovered from COVID-19 and is exposed again within 3 months, additional **quarantine** may not be required. HR should be consulted for guidance.

What employees are considered "critical infrastructure" employees?

For the purposes of this document, critical infrastructure employees include, but may not be limited to, those who perform the following functions: law enforcement, corrections, public works, janitorial, facilities maintenance, fire, E911. **Asymptomatic** critical infrastructure employees may be allowed to continue working following exposure, at the discretion of the supervisor/department head, as long as they remain **symptom**-free and abide by specific guidelines as required by CDC. Those requirements include pre-screening/temperature checks before starting work each day, regular monitoring of **symptoms**, use of a face mask, social distancing (6 feet away from others), and routine cleaning/disinfection of work areas.

Does Bulloch County do contact tracing?

No. The actions taken by supervisors and staff of Bulloch County Board of Commissioners are intended to identify exposures and contacts within the workplace only, and do not substitute for contact tracing. Contact tracing, an important public health activity, is performed by DPH.

Resources

- For questions or to report a COVID-19 illness or exposure, contact Bulloch County Human Resources Department – 912-764-0219
- For documents, policies, and other written guidance, check the "Resources" tab on Employee Self-Service (ESS)
- For more information from the CDC, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- For more information from DPH, visit - <https://dph.georgia.gov/>