



# **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.
- **Quarantine Chart** – This chart explains the standard and abbreviated quarantine periods as outlined by the Georgia DPH.

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

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

	<b>Scenario</b>	<b>Should Employee Work?*</b>	<b>Notify HR?</b>	<b>Other Notes</b>
<b>F</b>	Employee has been in <b>close contact</b> with someone who shows <b>symptoms</b> but who has not been tested	Employee can continue to work and <b>self-monitor symptoms</b> daily. (However, may be taken out of work if advised by a physician to <b>quarantine</b> .)	No (unless advised by doctor to <b>quarantine</b> )	<b>Critical infrastructure exception</b> may apply.
<b>G</b>	Employee has been in <b>close contact</b> with someone who shows <b>symptoms</b> but is still awaiting test results	Employee can continue to work and <b>self-monitor symptoms</b> daily. (However, may be taken out of work if advised by a physician to <b>quarantine</b> .)	No (unless advised by doctor to <b>quarantine</b> )	<b>Critical infrastructure exception</b> may apply.
<b>H</b>	Employee has been in <b>close contact</b> with someone who tested positive for COVID-19	No. Employee must <b>quarantine</b> (length of time determined by quarantine chart below) if no <b>symptoms</b> have arisen.  If <b>symptoms</b> appear, employee should stay home until: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) At least 10 days have passed since <b>symptoms</b> began; and</li> <li>2) Fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication); and</li> <li>3) Other <b>symptoms</b> have improved.</li> </ol>	Yes	Employee may not return to work until all <b>quarantine</b> timelines and requirements are met. (See chart below.)  <b>Fully vaccinated</b> individuals are not required to quarantine but should wear a mask indoors for 14 days after exposure.  <b>Critical infrastructure exception</b> may apply.
<b>I</b>	Employee lives with someone who tested positive for COVID-19	No. Employee must <b>quarantine</b> (length of time determined by quarantine chart below) if no <b>symptoms</b> have arisen.  If the sick person is isolated and has no additional further contact with the employee, the employee's <b>quarantine</b> begins on the day the day the person with COVID-19 began <b>isolation</b> .  If the employee has continued contact with the COVID-19 positive person, the employee's <b>quarantine</b> period starts over each day of contact, up to and including the day the person with COVID-19 ends <b>isolation</b> . ( <i>Employee's quarantine would extend 7, 10, or 14 days after the end of the sick person's isolation.</i> )  If a second member of the household tests positive or becomes sick with COVID-19, the <b>quarantine</b> dates will start over.	Yes	Employee may not return to work until all <b>quarantine</b> timelines and requirements are met. (See chart below.)  <b>Fully vaccinated</b> individuals are not required to quarantine but should wear a mask indoors for 14 days after exposure.  <b>Critical infrastructure exception</b> may apply.

	<b>Scenario</b>	<b>Should Employee Work?*</b>	<b>Notify HR?</b>	<b>Other Notes</b>
<b>J</b>	Employee is a <b>close contact</b> to someone who has been exposed to another COVID-19 positive person	Employee can continue to work and <b>self-monitor symptoms</b> daily.	No	N/A
<b>K</b>	Employee lives with someone who has been exposed to another COVID-19 positive person	Employee can continue to work and <b>self-monitor symptoms</b> daily.	No	N/A
<b>L</b>	Employee has no <b>symptoms</b> and no known exposure, but has taken a COVID-19 test preemptively	Employee may continue to work pending test results. If test result is positive, employee must notify HR and follow Scenario A above.	No (unless test result is positive)	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.

\***Fully vaccinated** individuals who remain asymptomatic DO NOT need to quarantine following exposure but should follow basic prevention measures: (1) wear a mask; (2) social distance; (3) avoid crowds; (4) wash hands frequently. Should symptoms later develop, the quarantined person will be considered a person with suspected COVID-19 and must isolate.

\*A person who has clinically recovered from COVID-19 and then is identified as a contact of a new case within 3 months of symptom onset or first positive test of their most recent illness does not need to be quarantined. If more than 3 months, quarantine is required.

\*When counting days for any calculation in this document, the date of testing, symptom onset, or exposure should be considered "Day 0" and the following day would be "Day 1."

## **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 a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period; or
- Living in the same household as a person with COVID-19 or providing care to someone who is sick with COVID-19; or
- Having direct physical contact with a person with COVID-19 (touched, hugged, kissed them); or
- Being in contact with secretions from a person with COVID-19 (being coughed/sneezed on, sharing utensils).

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.

**Fully Vaccinated:** An individual is considered fully vaccinated if it has been at least 14 days (2 weeks) since the completion of the COVID-19 vaccination series (two doses in a two-dose series OR one dose in a one-dose series.)

**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. The length of quarantine will vary depending on the exposed person's last contact with the sick person, as well as other variables as indicated in the chart at the end of this document. (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 may be (but are not required to 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 an exception to quarantine applies).

***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.

***If an employee is vaccinated, is quarantine required?***

Maybe not. A **fully vaccinated** employee does not need to quarantine following known exposure, as long as the employee is **asymptomatic**. Should **symptoms** develop following exposure (or should the employee test positive at any time), the employee must isolate or **quarantine** as otherwise outlined in this document.

***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, EMS, E911, judicial. **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
- 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/>
- To calculate quarantine/isolation periods, visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-quarantine-calculator>

Quarantine Type	Quarantine Length	Requirements/Notes
Standard	14 Days*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended quarantine length</li> <li>• Monitor health/follow mitigation strategies</li> </ul>
Reduced/No Test	10 Days*	May end quarantine after 10 full days have passed since most recent exposure, <b>if</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No COVID-19 test is taken AND</li> <li>• No COVID-19 symptoms during any of the 10 days</li> </ul> Continue to monitor health/follow mitigation strategies (including masking, social distancing, and handwashing) for full 14 days; isolate immediately if symptoms develop during this period.
Reduced/Test	7 Days*	May end quarantine after 7 full days have passed since most recent exposure, <b>if</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual takes a COVID-19 PCR or Antigen test (rapid test okay) after 5 full quarantine days (Test sample must be collected no more than 48 hours before planned end of quarantine) AND</li> <li>• Test result is negative AND</li> <li>• No COVID-19 symptoms during any of the 7 days.</li> </ul> Continue to monitor health/follow mitigation strategies (including masking, social distancing, and handwashing) for full 14 days; isolate immediately if symptoms develop during this period.
<i>NOTE: Individuals who develop COVID-19 symptoms during quarantine must follow the guidelines for persons exposed to COVID-19 who become sick. (See Georgia Department of Public Health guidance.)</i>		

\* For the purposes of this chart, the date of exposure is "Day 0."

**From Georgia Department of Public Health Fifteenth Amended Administrative Order for Public Health Control Measures (8/2/2021): Failure to comply with Georgia DPH isolation or quarantine guidance is a misdemeanor offense pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 31-5-8.**