



Office of State Human Resources

ROY COOPER
Governor

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NUMBER:

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Worksite Safety

Effective Date: October 5, 2020

Revision Date: June 15, 2021

Revision #: 2

RELATED LEGISLATION:

The purpose of this program is to establish general guidelines for AGENCY programs for COVID-19 safety pertaining to non-mandatory state employees reporting to work at non-healthcare and non-corrections/custody worksites to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure to state employees, visitors, contractors, vendors, and volunteers entering State owned and leased property.

I. Program Statement

Per the OSHA general duty clause, it is the responsibility of employers to protect employees from anticipated worksite hazards. This program establishes minimum standards for COVID-19 safety within AGENCY based upon OSHA rules, regulations, and guidance and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance, Executive Orders, DHHS Guidance, and other regulatory measures to protect health and safety of all persons present at worksites. Changing circumstances may require agencies to be flexible and alter their original plans to ensure public health and safety. Individual worksites within an AGENCY may adopt additional or enhanced requirements. **PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED UPON REVISED GUIDANCE FROM GOVERNMENT ENTITIES.**

II. Definitions

AGENCY: State department, division, subdivision, commission, board, or institution

Social Distancing: Actions taken to reduce the opportunities for close contact between people in order to limit the spread of a communicable disease.

Fully vaccinated: It has been two weeks since someone has received the second dose of a two-dose vaccine or two weeks after receiving a one-dose vaccine.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

Agency Head/Designee

Establish processes and procedures necessary to support COVID-19 safety measures enumerated in this program.

Maintain flexibility to alter established processes and procedures to ensure public health and safety, which includes having a contingency plan if return to teleworking is deemed necessary.

Human Resources Department

Establish and maintain process to handle employee COVID-19 related requests for accommodations including recordkeeping of requests received and response to all requests.

Respond to employees/supervisors' concerns regarding any COVID-19 related safety matter that may range from physical environment to how to address an employee's failure to follow COVID-19 safety guidelines i.e. refusal to wear face covering (if required), maintain six feet social distance, etc.

Administer process for response to **COVID-19 positive employee** at worksite including removing employee from worksite, appropriate worksite notification, cleaning protocols, and establishing return date.

Administer process for response to **COVID-19 symptomatic employee** at worksite including removing employee from worksite, cleaning protocols, and establishing return date.

Safety Director or Designated Worksite Safety Coordinator

Perform worksite health and safety risk assessments per guidelines of this Program.

Support implementation of COVID-19 safety measures as directed by management.

Provide consultation and assistance to employees and management to address COVID-19 related safety concerns.

Middle Managers/Supervisors

Respond to employee COVID-19 safety concerns to extent possible.

Direct employees to Human Resources staff for requests for accommodation related to COVID-19 safety measures.

Ensure employees returning to worksite receive information regarding COVID-19 related safety measures in effect at individual worksites such as use of cloth face coverings, social distancing requirements, reporting of COVID-19 symptomatic employees, and NC EAP contact information.

Ensure employees, contractors/vendors, and any other persons present at individual worksites are trained regarding COVID-19 related safety requirements.

Alert next level manager on duty when nonadherent persons refuse to comply with any COVID-19 safety requirements after providing verbal and/or written notice thereof.

Employees

Comply with directives of this Program.

Complete required training related to COVID-19 safety.

Contact supervisor or Human Resources staff regarding COVID-19 safety concerns as appropriate.

Direct requests for accommodations to Human Resources staff.

IV. Implementation

The guidance included herein may be further defined and revised upon issuance of updated federal and state government law and guidance.

1. Face Covering Use Requirements – information as of June 15, 2021

SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON STATE LAW OR EXECUTIVE ORDER CURRENTLY IN EFFECT

- Based on guidance from the CDC and NC DHHS, state employees who are not fully vaccinated are recommended to wear face coverings at work while indoors and within six feet of others.
 - All state employees are welcome to wear face coverings regardless of vaccination status, and agencies should not restrict state employees or customers from wearing face coverings.
- Under [Executive Order 215](#), and consistent with [CDC guidance](#), if state employees are in one of the following places, they must wear face coverings — whether they are vaccinated or unvaccinated:
 - Correctional and detention facilities
 - Facilities serving the homeless
 - Transportation facilities, such as:
 - Airports
 - Bus stations and stops
 - Train stations and stops
 - Certain health care settings:
 - Hospitals
 - Outpatient healthcare settings
 - Long Term Care facilities
 - Skilled nursing facilities
 - Intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities
 - Childcare facilities
 - Children's day or overnight camps
 - Schools
- Agency heads may require that employees or visitors/customers wear face coverings in other situations or settings. Supervisors can evaluate working conditions and propose to agency heads additional situations where face covering requirements should continue.
- Starting on Thursday, May 20, 2021 face coverings are not required for employees of Cabinet agencies, unless they are in one of the types of places listed above (like correctional facilities and hospitals) where face coverings are always required, or in a situation or setting where required by the agency head.

Because it can be hard to know who is vaccinated and who is not, some employers may decide to ask all employees to wear a face covering until more people in North Carolina are vaccinated.

Employees required to work in increased risk settings with possible close contact with COVID-19 positive individuals or infected materials must be supplied the appropriate PPE

and training for proper use by the agency. Such PPE is provided to onsite state employees at no charge.

Employees may utilize cloth face coverings and other PPE of their choice that do not interfere with completion of work duties so long as it is in good taste and any designs, graphics, or logos present a professional image acceptable to the general public.

Agencies may provide disposable face coverings for customers/visitors to wear while onsite.

2. Social Distancing

“Fully vaccinated” persons

DHHS Guidance states that fully vaccinated persons may gather with others who are vaccinated or unvaccinated and be in most indoor and outdoor public spaces without wearing a face covering or staying 6 feet apart.

DHHS Guidance also states that persons that are not fully vaccinated:

1. Should avoid indoor settings where people are not wearing face coverings;
2. Wear a face covering, maintain social distancing and be outside, if possible, when gathering with others; and
3. Wear a face covering and maintain social distance in all indoor public settings and in outdoor public settings when it is difficult to maintain 6 feet of distance.

Breakrooms/Kitchens

Individual agencies will determine whether kitchen/breakrooms will be available for employee use. If kitchen/breakroom is available, stagger occupancy and wash your hands.

Vending Machines

Individual agencies will determine whether vending machines will be supplied and operational. If vending machines are supplied and operational, wash your hands after use.

Fitness Facilities

Individual agencies will determine when fitness facilities will be available for employee use.

Lactation Rooms

Individual agencies will determine when lactation rooms will be available for employee use.

Conference Rooms/Classrooms

Agencies may opt to utilize in-person meetings or videoconferencing technology solutions or a combination of both.

Employees who are not fully vaccinated should maintain social distance and wear a face covering. Because it can be hard to know who is vaccinated and who is not, some employers may decide to ask all employees to wear a face covering until more people in North Carolina are vaccinated.

In-person Meetings

Agencies may opt to utilize in-person meetings or videoconferencing technology solutions or a combination of both.

Employees who are not fully vaccinated should maintain social distance and wear a face covering. Because it can be hard to know who is vaccinated and who is not, some employers may decide to ask all employees to wear a face covering until more people in North Carolina are vaccinated.

Travel

Individual agencies are responsible for granting travel requests given current State government travel rules.

CDC states that fully vaccinated persons may travel in the United States without needing to get tested before or after travel or self-quarantine after travel. International travelers need to pay close attention to the situation at their international destinations before traveling due to the spread of new variants and because the burden of COVID-19 varies globally. Discuss any questions with your supervisor or Agency Human Resources Office.

CDC states that persons should delay travel until fully vaccinated. If you are not fully vaccinated and do travel, get tested 1-3 days before and 3-5 days after travel AND stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel.

Shared Vehicles

For those who need or want to travel with more than one occupant in a vehicle, the following recommendations should be observed:

- Employees should perform a health self-screening for COVID-19 symptoms as identified by their agency when using a vehicle to go to work, when leaving work to go to another destination, and again when using the vehicle to return.
- All employees are welcome to wear a face covering while traveling in a shared vehicle.
- All drivers and occupants (if not fully vaccinated) must wear a cloth or other approved face covering, apply hand sanitizer and avoid snacking and eating or other activities that require removal of the face covering while in the vehicle.
- Weather conditions permitting, outside air ventilation should be increased to allow for the highest amount of air flow into the passenger compartment without causing discomfort to the occupants.

Discuss any questions with your supervisor or Agency Human Resources Office.

3. Symptom Screening for Onsite Employees

State agencies may adopt procedures regarding on-site employee participation in COVID-19 symptom screening. Detailed written procedures should be published and accessible to all employees.

When arriving at worksites, employees may be instructed to use designated entrances to undergo a health screening. The health screening process may include a symptom screening checklist, on-site temperature check, or other measures.

Information provided by employees during any COVID-19 screening process related to underlying health conditions, medical certification, doctor's notes, etc., is confidential and the employer should designate a person on site to ensure this information is protected.

All employees (trained medical staff or others) involved in any screening process must have proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and adhere to CDC Guidance for safe communicable disease screening procedures.

Such procedures may include disciplinary measures for failure to comply or for providing erroneous and misleading information.

The NC State Employee COVID-19 Symptom Screening Tool is available for use by all State agencies for employees working onsite to perform daily COVID-19 self-health Screening. It is accessible by mobile phone, tablet, or laptop computer.

Detailed Symptom Screening Tool information and weblink to the Tool are available at: <https://oshr.nc.gov/state-employee-resources/workplace-safety/safe-return-worksites-guidance-and-resources/covid-19-symptom-screening-tool-onsite-employees>

Please contact OSHR Safety Health & Workers' Compensation Division Director Scarlett Gardner regarding agency staff access to NC State Employee Symptom screening reporting capabilities.

4. Ongoing Hygiene/Prevention Practices

Agencies may continue utilizing ongoing COVID-19 safety measures at their worksite including:

- Recommending and facilitating vaccination of employees;
- Restrictions on number of visitors, or visits by appointment only;
- Barriers such as plexiglass screens in public-facing areas to separate employees and visitors;
- Increased access to hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray or wipes, or other cleaning products;
- Cleaning of high-touch surfaces at least once a day;
- Informational signs to explain importance of COVID-19 safety practices;
- Directional signs on floors to define traffic flow or ensure six feet of space between people;
- Temporarily closing shared spaces such as kitchens, breakrooms, fitness rooms, etc.;
- Assigning employees to individual workspaces in a new location; or
- Altering physical layout of a worksite.

5. Worksite Cleaning Practices

Ongoing awareness and partnership between employees and agencies to prevent the physical spread of COVID-19 at worksites will help maintain a healthy workforce.

Provide job safety analysis to protect employees conducting cleaning operations.

Provide appropriate PPE and training for all cleaning duties.

Secure PPE/supplies storage and designate specific staff to manage stock and distribute items.

Provide individual workspaces with necessary cleaning/disinfection and PPE supplies to reduce supply room visits.

Preferably, COVID-19 disinfection services should occur after hours to ensure all areas can be accessed.

Building and workspace closures until disinfection work is completed is at the discretion of the agency.

Increased sanitation in restrooms.

Agencies in leased spaces should work with property managers regarding these requirements.

Hand sanitizer available at entry and high-traffic locations for employee and visitor use.

Encourage employees to use disinfectant wipes or cleaner after contact with high-touch surfaces and shared-use items to help maintain a safe work environment, and to wash their hands.

6. Handling of COVID-19 Positive/Symptomatic Employees

Check Most Recently Revised CDC Guidelines for Updated Information

Maintain a plan to immediately and temporarily isolate at the worksite any employee(s) who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or illness while awaiting safe transport to their home or a healthcare facility. The employee should be sent home with the most recently updated DHHS guidance regarding self-isolation, directions to seek assessment and guidance from their medical provider, and instructions on when to return to onsite work. The DHHS Non-Healthcare Worker Symptom Screening Checklist that includes this information is available at: <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#current-easing-of-restrictions>

7. Worksite Cleaning Response for COVID-19 Symptomatic/Positive Employee

Check Most Recently Revised CDC Guidelines for Updated Information

Close off affected worksite areas used by the employee during the period when they might have been infectious. People are generally considered to be infectious from 48 hours before until 10 days after illness onset (or before and after collection of the first positive specimen for those

with no symptoms). Agencies do not necessarily need to close operations if they can close off affected areas.

Call housekeeping or vendor to request cleaning/disinfection services for work areas used by the symptomatic/positive employee.

Untrained agency employees should not participate in cleaning or disinfecting of affected areas as this process follows specific and rigorous protocols.

For questions: State-owned facilities in Wake County should call the Wake County Epidemiology Task Force, 919-856-7032. State agencies located in other counties should contact local departments, contact information available at

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/county-health-departments>.

Callers should explain that they are calling per OSHR guidance to contact their local health department so that the agency can confirm that they are taking appropriate control measures, sanitation, etc., as recommended by the local health department.

Employees should be timely notified when the cleaning process has been completed to provide reassurance that their worksite is safe.

8. Handling of COVID-19 Positive Employee Notification

Check Most Recently Revised CDC Guidelines for Updated Information

The local health department in the positive employee's county of residence will handle contact tracing.

Agencies should send out a general email notification to employees emphasizing the need to continue COVID-19 prevention measures. See Attachment 1 for a sample notification letter that may be adapted for agency use.

Follow most recently updated CDC guidance including Non-Healthcare Employee Symptom Screening Checklist for guidelines regarding when the employee should return to onsite work. <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#current-easing-of-restrictions>

9. Multi-agency Worksite COVID-19 Coordination

OSHR recommends that agency human resources directors, safety professionals and chief deputies in various agencies with shared worksites collaborate and adopt a mutually agreed upon COVID-19 response plan for that worksite to ensure proper handling of COVID-19 positive employees in buildings with multiple state agency occupants. This agreement can be in an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) format between the agencies. Specifically, agencies should focus on:

1. Demonstrating and documenting how notification will be provided to all building occupants; and
2. Demonstrating and documenting how notification will be made and executed regarding worksite cleaning when notice is received of a COVID-19 positive employee assigned to that worksite.

10. Training

Provide COVID-19 education, prevention strategies, videos, webinars, social media postings, worksite posters, and FAQ's to educate employees, contractors, and other worksite visitors regarding COVID-19 safety and public health measures implemented by AGENCY.

11. Signage

Provide notice via email, agency intranet, public website, worksite posters, and other communications methods to all employees, contractors, and other worksite visitors that regularly work at an AGENCY worksite or are entering its premises of COVID-19 safety related behavioral expectations included in this Program.

12. Physical Alterations to Worksites

After performing a health and safety risk assessment and BEFORE making any physical facility changes or enhancements to promote COVID-19 safety (i.e. installation of physical barriers, space reconfiguration, etc.), state agencies should:

For State owned worksites: Obtain approval from State Construction or other appropriate building maintenance designee for approval of any physical changes to facilities as such alterations could potentially cause ADA, egress, and life safety issues.

For leased worksites: Consult with the State Property Office, Leasing and Space Planning, and the property management company regarding such matters.

Each agency is responsible for ensuring adherence to applicable building and safety codes with regard to all proposed physical worksite alterations.

Agencies should consult with DOA Facilities Maintenance on their availability to assist with moving employees to alternate office space or moving furniture.

13. Procurement of COVID-19 Safety Items

Coordinate with DOA State Purchase and Contract (or other centralized purchasing entity) whenever possible to purchase cloth face coverings, disposable face coverings, hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, disinfectant spray, and other necessary COVID-19 safety items for employee use at worksite.

14. HVAC Considerations

Communicate with DOA Facilities Maintenance, agency management, or building management for leased spaces regarding proper operation of building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems that have been shut down or on setback, review new construction start-up guidance provided in ASHRAE Standard 180-2018, Standard Practice for the Inspection and Maintenance of Commercial Building HVAC Systems. All adjustments and changes to building HVAC systems must be done by qualified facilities maintenance staff, contractors or property manager.

- Take steps to improve ventilation in the building:

- Increase percentage of outdoor air (e.g., using economizer modes of HVAC operations) potentially as high as 100% (first verify compatibility with HVAC system capabilities for both temperature and humidity control as well as compatibility with outdoor/indoor air quality considerations).
- Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, if possible.
- Disable demand-control ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.
- Improve central air filtration:
 - Increase air filtration icon to as high as possible (MERV 13 or 14) without significantly diminishing design airflow.
 - Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass
- Consider running the building ventilation system even during unoccupied times to maximize dilution ventilation.
- Have staff work in areas served by “clean” ventilation zones that do not include higher-risk areas such as visitor reception or exercise facilities (if open).
- Consider using portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning (especially in higher risk areas).
- Ensure exhaust fans in restroom facilities are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.
- Consider using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplement to help inactivate the virus.

15. Water System Considerations

Communicate with DOA Facilities Maintenance, agency management, or building management for leased spaces regarding potential water stagnation issues due to prolonged facility shut down and take appropriate remedial actions such as system flushing before employees return.

16. OSHA Standards

All OSHA standards that apply to protecting workers from infection are applicable.

17. OSHA Reporting

Record work-related cases of COVID-19 illness on OSHA’s Form 300 logs if the following requirements are met:

- (1) the case is a confirmed case of COVID-19;
- (2) the case is work-related (as defined by 29 CFR 1904.5); and
- (3) the case involves one or more relevant recording criteria (set forth in 29 CFR 1904.7) (e.g., medical treatment, days away from work.)

For most recently updated COVID-19 OSHA reporting requirements, see <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/standards>

Employers must follow requirements in 29 CFR 1904 <https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1904> when reporting COVID-19 fatalities and hospitalizations to OSHA.

Attachment 1: GENERAL EMAIL NOTIFICATION OF COVID-19 POSITIVE EMPLOYEE

Memorandum

TO:

FROM:

RE: Notification of COVID-19 positive test at AGENCY/LOCATION

DATE:

On DATE, AGENCY was notified that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19. The employee is based at FACILITY/LOCATION and was last in the building on DATE.

We understand that you may have questions and want to reassure you that we are committed to supporting our COVID-19 positive colleague and providing all employees timely information and resources. The health and safety of our workforce is our top priority and we are already taking steps to ensure:

- **CLOSE CONTACTS ARE NOTIFIED:** To ensure rapid notification of exposure, any employee(s) identified as a close contact of the infected employee (defined as any employee within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting two days before illness onset) will be notified by public health authorities. Close contacts are required to self-quarantine for 14 days from their last potential exposure and will not be at the worksite.
- **SELF-QUARANTINE IS SUPPORTED:** State and local county health departments will ensure that any of your co-workers who are required to self-quarantine will receive the medical and social support they need to have a safe environment with access to appropriate resources.
- **WORKSPACES ARE SANITIZED:** Workspaces utilized by the positive employee will be thoroughly cleaned in accordance with CDC Guidance. If you are asked to temporarily vacate your usual workspace, please limit items you take with you as the virus can remain active on surfaces for an extended period.
- **PRIVACY IS PROTECTED:** While medical privacy laws impose strict confidentiality requirements regarding the specific identity of the positive employee, all employees will be given the information they need to protect themselves. If you suspect that you have [COVID-19 symptoms](#), please contact NAME in Human Resources.
- **INFECTION CONTROLS ARE MAINTAINED:** All employees must be vigilant about hygiene, including: not coming to work if you are sick, covering your cough or sneeze (with a sleeve or a tissue), regularly using hand sanitizer, wearing a face covering that covers the nose and mouth, and maintaining social distance of at least six feet from other people.
- **YOU RECEIVE ACCESS TO EAP:** Any employees needing assistance with anxiety or other emotional concerns are encouraged to contact the [N.C. Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) at 888-298-3907 or 704-717-5295 to speak with an experienced, licensed counselor. This service is free to you and members of your household and completely confidential.
- **YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND COVID-19 RESOURCES:** Employees are encouraged to get additional COVID-19 information and resources from the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services website at www.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus

On behalf of AGENCY, thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through these processes. Our agency is committed to ensuring a safe workplace, offering support and resources to our employees, and providing timely and accurate information about COVID-19. If you have any questions related to this notification or other COVID-19 concerns, please do not hesitate to contact NAME in Human Resources.

During this unprecedented public health emergency, we value and thank you for your continued commitment to serve the people of North Carolina.