FROM: Dr. Renee Cassidy, Chester County Health Department

Hello, all,

Thanks for all you are doing to keep our counties safe. Chester County Health Department is getting a lot of questions about healthcare personnel, so I want to send some guidance for Employee Screening of healthcare workers and first responders.

Many healthcare personnel and first responders work at multiple different facilities. Some facilities currently have outbreaks of COVID-19. All facilities face potential workforce shortages and are permitted to utilize exposed but asymptomatic health care personnel (HCP). We therefore recommend the following employee screening guidelines to be implemented immediately, so the healthcare personnel are not exposing patients, clients, and staff to COVID-19.

For first responders and healthcare workers with known exposure to COVID-19 patients, follow CDC guidelines to determine high, medium, and low risk and determine work exclusions and return to work: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html If your occupational health or infection control practitioner would like to consult with our Disease Investigation and Surveillance team on a particular case, please call 610-344-6452. Please refrain from having individual healthcare workers call the Health Department as we are unable to provide personal guidance to every exposed individual.

For general employee screening:

1. **Anyone symptomatic with fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath, from any infectious cause, should stay home from work.** We are not recommending everyone with symptoms get tested. They will have to stay home while they have symptoms regardless of testing and regardless of cause of illness. There are known false negatives with these tests so even a negative test will not allow them to work earlier while symptomatic, not even with a mask.

   Symptomatic healthcare personnel may return to work when:
   - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since fever went away without the use of fever-reducing medication
   - **AND** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
   - **AND** At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

After recovering and returning to work, HCP with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should:
• Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer.
• Be restricted from contact with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days after illness onset.
• Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette in CDC’s interim infection control guidance (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles).
• Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from occupational health/primary care provider and do not work if symptoms recur or worsen.

2. **All employees** should be screened upon report to work each day/shift.
   • Do you have fever, cough, shortness of breath? (yes to any = exclude; no, none of the above = proceed to temperature check)
   • Take temperature of each employee. An oral temperature of 100.0°F or greater is considered fever under these circumstances, because COVID-19 is a viral illness and has a tendency to cause lower fevers than bacterial illnesses. Rectal and tympanic temperatures are usually about 0.5 to 1 degree higher than oral, so using 100.4°F or higher is a typical cutoff. Axillary and temporal temperatures are usually about 0.5 to 1 degree lower than oral, so using 99.5°F or higher is a typical cutoff.

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**Chester County Health Department**
*protecting you and your environment*

*Note that I work part time, flexible hours. I may not respond to emails immediately and may email you at atypical times. Please do not feel obligated to reply to emails outside of your working hours.*