pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

GUIDANCE ON BUSINESS PRACTICES AMID COVID-19

UPDATED MARCH 27, 2020

The Department of Health (DOH) has received questions and requests for business guidance amid the Coronavirus-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak. The Department is providing the below guidance in response.

Closure of All Non-Life Sustaining Businesses

Governor Wolf has taken action to protect the public and businesses to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. On March 19 at 8:00 p.m., Governor Wolf issued an order to close all non-life sustaining businesses. The complete list of non-life sustaining can be found here.

Businesses that were ordered to close under this order and believe that they could help mitigate the COVID-19 crisis or provide life essential services should read the Department of Community and Economic Development's Frequently Asked Questions for life sustaining businesses to determine if they should apply for a waiver.

Closures are being enforced by the Pennsylvania State Police and local law enforcement agencies.

Stay at Home Orders

The Governor has issued a Stay at Home order for heavily impacted counties. Individuals residing in these counties MUST stay at home except for certain essential activities. Traveling to and from work at a life sustaining organization and other activities related to operation of life sustaining organizations are considered essential activities. Guidance on the Stay at Home order can be found here.

As of March 27, the Stay at Home order includes 19 counties: Allegheny, Berks, Bucks, Butler, Chester, Delaware, Erie, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Pike, Wayne, Westmoreland and York counties.

Protecting Your Employees, Customers and Visitors from COVID-19

The following is information for life sustaining businesses on measures to take to protect the health of employees, customers, and visitors and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The CDC has also issued interim guidance for businesses and employers to protect the health of their employees. To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only guidance from the DOH or CDC.

Do not make determinations of risk based on an employee's race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

Preventive Measures

Businesses are encouraged to increase education on preventing the spread of COVID-19 by incorporating the following preventive measures into daily business practice:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, do not use your hands;
- Clean surfaces frequently, such as countertops, light switches, cell phones and other frequently touched areas;
- Contain--if an employee is sick, they should stay home until they are feeling better.

Protecting Employee Health

Businesses should take the following steps to protect the health of employees and limit the spread of COVID-19:

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees with COVID-19 symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should be advised to stay home.

- If an employee is well but a family or household member tests positive for COVID-19, the employee must be **quarantined** for 14 days after the case has been released from isolation.

- Be aware that some employees may be at higher risk for serious illness, such as adults 65 and older and those with chronic medical conditions. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, customers and visitors, or to telework if possible.

- Separate sick employees who appear to have symptoms of COVID-19 (i.e., fever, cough, shortness of breath) immediately. See below for the steps to take if an employee, employee's household member, close contact, or customer is confirmed to have COVID-19.

- Inform employees of eligibility for paid leave. As of April 1, certain employees may now be eligible for paid leave through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

- Employees with no paid leave may be eligible for [unemployment compensation](#) if they are **quarantined** or must self-**isolate** due to COVID-19.

- Identify where and how employees may be exposed at work. See OSHA's [guidance for employers](#) for how to measure and ways to reduce risk of exposure.

- Encourage employees to practice social distancing. This means maintaining at least 6 feet between employees during all interactions, including lunch, employee trainings, and other workplace events.

- Use videoconferencing or teleconferencing for work-related meetings and gatherings when possible. Large in-person meetings and gatherings should be canceled or postponed if videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not available.

- Employees that work in non-healthcare settings do not need to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when preforming job duties but should follow all other guidance to minimize risk of exposure.

- Educate employees about [steps to protect themselves](#) at work and at home.

Employee Exposure to COVID-19

If an Employee Tests Positive for COVID-19:

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, close contacts of the employee should be notified, but the identity of the person who may have exposed them should not be shared.

Return to work guidance for an employee diagnosed with COVID-19 that **does not work in a healthcare setting**:

- Stay home for at least seven days after you are tested AND wait until the employee is fever free for 72 hours;

- After encouraging the employee to follow the DOH **isolation** guidelines and consulting with your employee about their condition, the employee may go back to work.

 If an employee has had **close contact** with another employee who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the exposed employee should **quarantine** at home for 14 days.

If an employee did not have close contact with their coworker, they do not need to be sent home but should continue to closely monitor for symptoms. More detailed guidance on exposure risks can be found here.

Employers should practice proper cleaning and sanitizing, especially if an employee has tested positive for COVID-19. More information on proper sanitizing practices can be found here.

If a household member or close contact of an employee tests positive for COVID-19:

Because exposure is considered to be ongoing within the house, household contacts of persons with COVID-19 must be **quarantined** for 14 days after the case has been released from isolation. This means that household contacts will need to remain at home longer than the initial case. The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Employers should practice proper cleaning and sanitizing, especially if a customer or close contact of an employee has tested positive for COVID-19. More information on proper sanitizing practices can be found here.

If an employee has traveled from an area that has been heavily impacted by COVID-19:

The United States Department of State has initiated a Level 4 Global Travel Advisory. This advisory discourages United States citizens from all international travel. International business travel should be suspended until further notice.

Domestic travel should be limited and destinations where COVID-19 is spreading rapidly should be avoided. Non-essential business travel should be avoided. Please see the Department of Health's Travel Information website for more information about travel restrictions and guidance.

If an employee has had close contact with another person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 while traveling, the exposed employee should **quarantine** at home for 14 days.

Maintaining a Healthy Work Environment

The Department of Health encourages businesses to take the following steps to ensure a healthy work environment:

- Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and visitors:
  - Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained;

- o Discourage handshaking;
- o Direct employees to visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information;
- o Encourage practices such as social distancing and teleworking.

- Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:
  - o Employers should routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs;
  - o If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection;
  - o For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available [here](#);
  - o More detailed guidance on cleaning and disinfecting can be found [here](#).

- Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility:
  - o It is recommended to close off areas used by the ill persons and wait as long as possible before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets;
  - o Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area;
  - o Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces;
  - o When cleaning, the CDC recommends wearing disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process and washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
  - o If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).

Education & Training

All employees should be educated on the [steps to protect themselves](#) from exposure to COVID-19 at work and at home.

OSHA has developed training for employers and employees on occupational exposure risk and protocols for prevention. Training from OSHA is available [here](#).

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has provided guidance entitled Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act, consistent with these workplace protections and rules, that can help employers implement strategies to navigate the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace. This pandemic publication, which was written during the prior H1N1 outbreak, is still relevant today and identifies established ADA and Rehabilitation Act principles to answer questions frequently asked about the workplace during a pandemic.

Public Health Terminology

Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick. Isolation is usually voluntary, but in an emergency, officials have the authority to isolate people who are sick.

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. Quarantined people may or may not become sick; but separating them from those who were never exposed helps prevent the spread of the disease. Quarantine can be voluntary, but in an emergency, officials have the authority to quarantine people who have been exposed to an infectious disease.

Close Contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time. Close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case, or having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on).

Congregate settings are crowded public places where close contact with others may occur, such as shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums.

Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.

Other Information

This guidance will be in effect **immediately** and through the duration of the Governor's COVID-19 Disaster Declaration. The Department may update or supplement this guidance as needed.

For the most up to date information for individuals, businesses, and schools, please visit the Responding to COVID-19 in Pennsylvania Guide.