

COVID-19: Guidance for Businesses and Employers

The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) is monitoring closely the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak. Current information suggests that person-to-person spread will continue to occur and more cases might be identified in the United States, including in Chicago. CDPH's goal is to reduce the impact of COVID-19 in Chicago by detecting new cases quickly, minimizing transmission and developing guidance to prepare communities to respond.

The following interim guidance is intended for businesses and employers and may help prevent exposures to all acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. The guidance also provides planning considerations if there are more widespread, community outbreaks of COVID-19.

Recommended strategies for businesses and employers to use now:

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4°F) for at least 24 hours.
 - Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

Separate sick employees:

- Employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available), and perform hand hygiene.
- Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:
 - Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
 - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
 - Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
 - Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.

Perform routine environmental cleaning:

- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
- No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:

- Check the [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from China, and information for aircrew, can be found at on the CDC website.

Planning for a Possible COVID-19 Outbreak in Chicago:

Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences:

- Employers should plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace. Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
- Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.
- Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products. Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).

Review and Update Your Organization's Emergency Operations Plan:

- Ensure the plan is flexible.
- Share your plan with employees and explain what human resources policies, workplace and leave flexibilities, and pay and benefits will be available to them.
- Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws.
- Explore whether you can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies.
 - Ensure that you have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees who may be able to work from home.
- Identify essential business functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements within your supply chains (e.g., raw materials, suppliers, subcontractor services/products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations.
 - Plan for how your business will operate if there is increasing absenteeism or these supply chains are interrupted.

- Establish a process to communicate information to employees and business partners on your infectious disease outbreak response plans and latest COVID-19 information.
 - Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.
- Consider cancelling large work-related meetings or events.

For more information on how workplace settings can prepare for an infectious disease outbreak, see CDC's [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#).

For more information on Chicago's COVID-19 response, please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus, email coronavirus@chicago.gov, or call **312-746-4835**.