



How to Handle a Positive COVID-19 Case at Work

Checklists, templates and more for the first 48 hours.

New CDC and vaccination status guidance included!!



Your Employee Tests Positive for COVID-19. What Do You Do?

As Hawaii re-opens its economy, employers must be prepared to handle a potential rise in COVID-19 cases. This means knowing what to do if an employee tests positive, or if an employee has been exposed to someone who has COVID-19.

Even though employers may be hoping for the best, it is best to have a plan for the worst. In this guidance, you'll find helpful information on:

- **Section 1: What to do when employees test positive**
- **Section 2: Quarantine and isolation guidance**
- **Section 3: How to sanitize your workplace**

This guidance is for employers whose workers do not work in healthcare. The CDC has [separate guidance](#) for healthcare workers and workplaces.

Section 1:

What to Do When An Employee Tests Positive

If an employee has confirmed a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, or presumes they have the virus, take these steps *immediately*.

- Don't allow sick employees into the workplace** if they're exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Ask employees who have COVID-19 to identify workers they have been in close contact** with.
Note: The CDC defines "close contact" as being within 6 feet of someone for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more, over a 24-hour period (starting 2 days before the employee became ill or tested positive for COVID-19).
- Inform impacted employees** who've worked closely with a COVID-19 carrier of their possible exposure but *DO NOT* identify the name of the infected employee. Sample script: "Someone in our workplace has tested positive for COVID-19, and they have identified you as a close contact according to the CDC definition. We are here to support you. If you are at work, please prepare to leave as quickly as you can. Once you get home, find a place to self-quarantine, monitor yourself for any symptoms, and talk to your doctor for next steps."
- Immediately send home employees** who a) display COVID-19 symptoms, or b) worked in close contact with an employee who has COVID and is unvaccinated. Note: Fully vaccinated do NOT need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 *unless they have symptoms*. However, testing is recommended 5-7 days after exposure.
- Encourage impacted workers to seek immediate medical advice** from their healthcare provider to determine whether quarantining, isolation, or additional testing are appropriate.
- Consider informing all employees of the exposure in your workplace**. However, respect the confidentiality of the affected employees and simply state the facts.
- Thoroughly disinfect the workplace according to CDC guidelines**. Additionally, consider informing building management so they can take cleaning and disinfecting precautions.
- Provide the employees with information on sick leave** and other applicable benefits (e.g., local/federal benefits such as PTO, TDI etc.). Note: Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) paid sick leave ended September 30, 2021. Employees are no longer eligible for this benefit and employers are no longer eligible for the FFCRA tax credit.

Before an Employee Gets Sick:

- Provide all employees information** regarding COVID-19 so they can adhere to CDC guidelines and protect their families/friends.
- Routinely remind all managers and employees** of your COVID-19 safe work policies and best practices.
- Regularly and thoroughly disinfect the workplace** according to CDC guidelines.
- Designate a separate area** at your work site where employees who become ill during the work day can await transportation to their home or to medical care.
- Designate a point of contact** with whom employees should communicate any COVID-19 updates.

Important HR Reminders:

- **You should not identify the name of affected employees.** Keep health info confidential, per the ADA, HIPAA, and other state laws.
- **It's okay to ask all employees entering the workplace if they have COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19, or if they have been tested for COVID-19** per ADA pandemic guidance. If the answer is “yes” to any of these questions, the employer may prevent the employee from entering the workplace since doing so will pose a direct threat to employees.
- **Don't forget to communicate pay policies and other company benefits** to affected employees and close contacts. Under Hawaii's existing TDI program, workers may be eligible for up to 26 weeks of paid leave via TDI to cover absences caused by COVID-19 *illness* (exposure or quarantine is ineligible). To be eligible, employees need to have worked a minimum of 20 hrs for the 14 weeks in the previous four completed calendar quarters. Their contraction or self-quarantine cannot be work-related and they also cannot be receiving UI or WC benefits. Employees may also be eligible for 12 weeks unpaid leave via [FMLA](#).
- **You may need to fill out an OSHA Form 300 log** if an employee is confirmed positive for COVID-19 while performing a work-related duty. If you're a ProService client, please seek advice from one of our safety experts to determine if the incident must be recorded.
- **You do not need to notify the CDC or the DOH** to inform them of the positive diagnosis.

Sample Email to Employees:

Aloha, We learned [today] that one of our employees has tested positive for COVID-19. The employee who tested positive on [date] is now [self-isolating]. [Identify the area(s) where and the date(s) when the employee frequently worked].

Due to privacy laws, we cannot identify the name of the employee who tested positive . However, we have gathered the names of those employees that have worked in close contact (within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more, over a 24-hour period) and have advised them to rest at home and seek immediate medical advice from their healthcare provider on next steps. If you were not already told you were in close contact, then you have not worked in close proximity with the employee.


At [Company Name], the health and well-being of our employees is paramount. Out of an abundance of caution, we are closing the [Location] office on [Dates]. While the office is closed, we will clean and disinfect the [Location] office. All [Location] employees with remote work capabilities are expected to work from home while the office is closed. Each employee should consult with their manager for additional instructions.


If you have questions or concerns, please contact [Company Contact]. We are here to support everyone during this difficult time, and we all send our best wishes to the people affected. You may also check the [CDC COVID-19 site](#) for additional info, and also check out [Hawaii's DOH website](#). Mahalo!


Section 2:


Quarantine & Isolation Cheat Sheet

Use this cheat sheet to explain the isolation/quarantine/testing requirements to employees depending on their various situations and vaccination status.

Who:	What:	Additional Testing:	Return to Routine:
 <p>#1: The Case (Vaccinated or Unvaccinated)</p> <p>A person who has tested positive for COVID-19, or who has symptoms (regardless of their vaccination status)</p>	<p>Must <u>isolate/separate</u> from people who do not have COVID-19.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stay at home (except to seek medical care) until it's safe to be around others ● Stay away from others while at home, including staying in a separate room, not eating meals with other people, avoiding physical contact with household/pets ● Wear a mask if you have to be around others ● Do not share unwashed personal household items (e.g., cups, utensils) ● Monitor symptoms ● Call 911 if you have a medical emergency (e.g., trouble breathing, chest pain) 	<p>No additional testing.</p> <p>Person has already been tested and confirmed to have COVID-19.</p>	<p>You can return to routine activities when all the following conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared* and ● 24 hours with no fever without use of fever-reducing medications; and ● Symptoms have improved or resolved. <p><i>* If you never developed symptoms, you can stop isolation after 5 days after your COVID-19 test was collected, followed by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others.</i></p>

Who:	What:	Additional Testing:	Return to Routine:
 <p>#2a: Close Contact, Non-Household (Unvaccinated):</p> <p>A person who has been within 6 feet of the Case for a combined total of at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period*</p> <p><i>* Starting 2 days before the Case became ill or tested positive for COVID-19.</i></p>	<p>Must <u>quarantine/stay home</u> and avoid other people for 5 days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remain at home in quarantine for 5 days, even if you test negative. ● Stay away from others in the household, especially those who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID. ● Wear a mask if you have to be around others. ● Monitor symptoms for 14 days after last contact with the Case. If you develop symptoms, get tested again and immediately self-isolate. 	<p>Get tested immediately, even if you don't have symptoms.</p> <p>Get tested again in 5-7 days after last contact with the Case (if initial test was negative), or immediately self-isolate if symptoms develop.</p>	<p>You can return to routine activities when all the following conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5 days have passed since the last close contact with the person with COVID-19 and ● No symptoms <p>However, the CDC recommends strict mask use for 5 days following your quarantine.</p>
<p>#2b: Close Contact, Non-Household (Vaccinated):</p>	<p>Don't need to quarantine if you don't have symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monitor symptoms for 14 days after last contact with the Case. If you develop symptoms, get tested again and immediately self-isolate. 	<p>Get tested again in 5-7 days after last contact with the Case (if initial test was negative), or immediately self-isolate if symptoms develop.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Who:	What:	Additional Testing:	Return to Routine:
 <p>#3a: Close Contact, Household (Unvaccinated*):</p> <p>A person who lives in the same house and has ongoing contact with the Case.</p> <p><i>* Or, a person who is 6 mos from 2nd Moderna/Pfizer shot, or 2 mos from J & J shot</i></p>	<p>Must <u>quarantine/stay at home</u> while the Case is in isolation <u>AND</u> for an additional 5 days after that if unable to avoid contact with the Case (e.g., living in the same house with no separate bedroom, bathroom, and living space, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remain at home in quarantine for 5 days, even if you test negative. ● Stay away from others in the household, especially those who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID. ● Wear a mask if you have to be around others. ● Monitor symptoms for 14 days after last contact with the Case. If you develop symptoms, get tested again and immediately self-isolate. 	<p>Get tested immediately, even if you don't have symptoms.</p> <p>Get tested again in 5-7 days after last contact with the Case (if initial test was negative), or immediately self-isolate if symptoms develop.</p>	<p>You can return to routine activities when all the following conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Case has finished isolating <u>and</u> ● 5 days have passed since last close contact with the person with COVID-19 <u>and</u> ● No symptoms <p>However, the CDC recommends strict mask use when around others for 5 days following your quarantine.</p>
<p>#3b: Close Contact, Household (Vaccinated):</p>	<p>You don't need to quarantine if you don't have symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monitor symptoms for 14 days after last contact with the Case. If you develop symptoms, get tested again and immediately self-isolate. 	<p>Get tested again in 5-7 days after last contact with the Case (if initial test was negative), or immediately self-isolate if symptoms develop.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Who:	What:	Additional Testing:	Return to Routine:
 <p>#4: Close Contact of Close Contact (Vaccinated or Unvaccinated)</p> <p>A person who lives with or has been in contact with a Close Contact but has had no contact with the Case.</p>	<p>You don't need to quarantine if you don't have symptoms.</p>	<p>You don't need to test if you don't have symptoms.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Additional Resources:

- [CDC Shortens Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Period for General Population](#), CDC, 12.27.21
- [Testing, Quarantine & Isolation](#), State of Hawaii Portal
- [Workplace Guidance](#), State of Hawaii Portal

Section 3:

How to Sanitize Your Workplace

Make sure to thoroughly clean and disinfect any area in which COVID carriers and close contacts spent time in.

Pre-Cleaning Checklist:

- Educate workers** performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 and provide instruction about what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus.
- Develop policies for worker protection and provide training to all cleaning staff** on site prior to providing cleaning tasks. Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly put on, use, and take off PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.
- Ensure workers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals** used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200](#)).
- Comply with OSHA's standards** on Bloodborne Pathogens ([29 CFR 1910.1030](#)), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and PPE ([29 CFR 1910.132](#)).

Disinfecting Checklist:

- Close off areas** used by the ill persons.
- Open outside doors** and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- If possible, **wait up to 24 hours** before beginning cleaning and disinfection to reduce exposure to respiratory droplets in the air.
- Clean and disinfect all areas** used by the sick person.
- Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces** like tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.
- Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks** in the cleaning process, including handling the trash, and **wash hands often** for 20 seconds or longer.
- Additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary** if more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility.
- Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be **opened for use**.
- Continue cleaning and disinfecting**, which includes everyday practices that businesses and communities normally use to maintain a healthy environment.

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