

What Now for Employers?

CDC Issues New Recommendations Regarding Isolation

January 6, 2022

By Katherine Witherspoon Fry

So, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued guidance shortening the recommended time that people should quarantine from 10 days to 5 days based on certain conditions.

The CDC's new guidance says:

1. For those who test positive for COVID-19, but don't have symptoms, the quarantine period may be reduced from 10 days to 5 days as long as the person wears a mask around others (everywhere) for at least 5 additional days. However, if a person has a fever, they should continue to quarantine until the fever resolves (without medication for 24 hours).
2. The CDC's recommendation is the same as above for symptomless people who had close contacts with positive individuals if they are:
 1. unvaccinated,
 2. over 6 months out from receiving the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
 3. 2 months out from their single dose of Johnson & Johnson (without a booster).

(I'm sure that you remember the definition of "close contact": someone within 6 feet of the positive person for 15 minutes or longer during a 24-hour period.)

1. The CDC now advises that no quarantine is needed for those with close contacts with people who tested positive and who have no symptoms and:
 - have received a booster shot,
 - are less than six months out from being fully vaccinated with Pfizer or Moderna,
 - are less than 2 months from their J&J vaccine, or
 - vaccinated people who are not yet eligible for a booster – including students younger than 16.

People who are fully vaccinated should wear a mask in public indoor spaces for 10 days. Keep in mind that even those meeting criteria in #3 above who have symptoms should test and follow #1.

According to the CDC, for all those exposed, best practice would also include a COVID-19 test at day 5 after exposure. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not related to COVID-19. Good luck getting a test at home, but states still have PCR testing centers and some pharmacies are providing

rapid and PCR tests for free.

What does all of this mean for employers?

1. Revise your policies. There will be less impact from COVID-19 on attendance, so long as your employees wear masks and remain symptomless. Be sure to include and enforce the mask mandate.
2. Collect data on employees' vaccinated versus unvaccinated status and dates of vaccination and boosters in order to enforce the guidelines. Maintain strict confidentiality.
3. Continue to inform other employees, customers, visitors, and the state's health department of a positive case.

I hope that this is helpful. Please feel free to contact me with any related questions.