



**STATE OF NEVADA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION**  
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MEMORANDUM

December 8, 2020

TO: All Department Directors

FROM: Laura E. Freed, Director  
Department of Administration

SUBJECT: **Guidance on Employee Return to Work After COVID-19 Infection or Exposure**

In past Administration memoranda, it was noted that employees who test positive for COVID-19 may return to work when they meet the criteria to discontinue isolation. In practice, various state agencies have asked employees to furnish a negative COVID-19 test result to come back to the office. However, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not recommend using COVID testing in this way, due to the ability of patients to shed viral fragments after the infectious period has passed. Moreover, given the worrying surge in cases in Nevada, it may be difficult to obtain a COVID-19 test upon request. This memorandum is designed to explain the newest guidance to discontinue isolation after being infected with COVID-19.

According to CDC guidance, persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to convalesce at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

- At least ten (10) days have passed since symptoms first appeared; **and**
- At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine; **and**
- Other symptoms have improved.

Please note that the above criteria pertain to mild or moderate COVID illness<sup>1</sup>. More severe cases may require isolation up to 20 days after symptom onset.

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<sup>1</sup> Mild illness is defined as having any of the various signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, sore throat, malaise, loss of smell or taste, headache, body aches, muscle pain) without shortness of breath or abnormal chest imaging. Moderate illness means individuals who have evidence of lower respiratory disease by clinical assessment or imaging, and oxygen saturation (SpO<sub>2</sub>) greater than or equal to 94% on room air at sea level.

Persons with a positive COVID-19 test who are asymptomatic may discontinue isolation ten (10) days after the date of their first positive test.

The CDC does not recommend that employers use a negative test as a requirement for employees to return to the workplace unless a health care provider deems it clinically necessary. The CDC has found that recovered patients can have the virus detected in upper respiratory specimens for up to 12 weeks after infection. So, to require a negative test to return to work might unnecessarily extend an employee's isolation if they receive a positive test result despite no longer being infectious.

Finally, the Department of Administration understands that testing has been used in various agencies to rule out infection in cases of exposure. The CDC recommends 10 days of quarantine after exposure based on the time it takes to develop illness if infected. If an employee is able to obtain a COVID test and it is negative, that quarantine can be shortened to seven (7) days, as long as no symptoms present. As you know, the previous CDC guidance was 14 days of quarantine after exposure.

As the CDC learns more about the behavior of the virus, the guidance may change. The Department of Administration remains committed to sharing best practices with agencies so that they may adjust their human resources policies and procedures accordingly.