

COVID-19 WORKPLACE GUIDANCE



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This material contained in this document is for information and reference purposes only and is not intended as legal or professional advice. The adoption of the practices described in this material may not meet all the needs, requirements, or obligations of individual workplaces.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Symptoms of COVID-19	3
How COVID-19 Spreads	4
How a Covid-19 Outbreak Could Affect Workplaces	4
Develop an Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan	5
Prepare to Implement Basic Infection Prevention Measures	6
Develop Policies and Procedures for Prompt Identification and Isolation of Sick People	6
Develop, Implement, and Communicate About Workplace Flexibilities and Protections	7
Summary.....	7

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Depending on the severity of COVID-19's international impacts, outbreak conditions— including those rising to the level of a pandemic—can affect all aspects of daily life, including travel, trade, tourism, food supplies, boarding facilities, veterinary clinics, and financial markets.

Employers should prepare themselves and their workers of potentially worsening outbreak conditions. Lack of continuity planning can result in a cascade of failures as employers attempt to address challenges of COVID-19 with insufficient resources and workers who might not be adequately trained for jobs they may have to perform under pandemic conditions.

This guidance is intended for planning purposes. Employers and workers should use this planning guidance to help identify risk levels in workplace settings and to determine any appropriate control measures to implement. Additional guidance may be needed as COVID-19 outbreak conditions change, including as new information about the virus, its transmission, and its impact becomes available.

This guidance is advisory in nature and informational in content. It is not a standard or a regulation, and it neither creates new legal obligations nor alters existing obligations created by any governmental entity.

SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

Infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, can cause illness ranging from mild to severe and, in some cases, can be fatal. Symptoms typically include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Some people infected with the virus have reported experiencing other non-respiratory symptoms. Other people, referred to as asymptomatic cases, have experienced no symptoms at all.

According to most Health Agencies, symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

HOW COVID-19 SPREADS

Although the first human cases of COVID-19 likely resulted from exposure to infected animals, infected people can spread SARS-CoV-2 to other people.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person- to-person, including:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has SARS-CoV-2 on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the primary way the virus spreads.

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (i.e., experiencing fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this type of asymptomatic transmission with this new coronavirus, but this is also not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

HOW A COVID-19 OUTBREAK COULD AFFECT WORKPLACES

Like influenza viruses, SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has the potential to cause extensive outbreaks. Under conditions associated with widespread person-to-person spread, multiple areas may see impacts at the same time. An outbreak may also be an extended event. As a result, workplaces may experience:

- **Absenteeism** – Workers could be absent because they are sick; are caregivers for sick family members; are caregivers for children if schools or day care centers are closed; have at-risk people at home, such as immunocompromised family members; or are afraid to come to work because of fear of possible exposure.
- **Change in patterns of Consumer Behavior** – Consumer demand for items related to infection prevention (e.g., respirators) is likely to increase significantly, while consumer interest in other goods may decline. Consumers may also change shopping patterns because of a COVID-19 outbreak. Consumers may try to shop at off-peak hours to reduce contact with other people, show increased interest in home delivery services, or prefer other options, such as drive-through service, to reduce person-to-person contact. An example might include valet service for Boarding and Veterinary Facilities.
- **Interrupted supply/delivery** – Shipments of items from geographic areas severely affected by COVID-19 may be delayed or cancelled with or without notification.

DEVELOP AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN

If one does not already exist, develop an infectious disease preparedness and response plan that can help guide protective actions against COVID-19.

Stay abreast of guidance from federal, state, local, tribal, provincial and/or territorial health agencies, and consider how to incorporate those recommendations and resources into workplace-specific plans.

Plans should consider and address the level(s) of risk associated with various worksites and job tasks workers perform at those sites. Such considerations may include:

- Where, how, and to what sources of SARS-CoV-2 might workers be exposed, including:
 - The general public, customers, and coworkers
 - Sick individuals or those at particularly high risk of infection (e.g., international travelers who have visited locations with widespread sustained (ongoing) COVID-19 transmission)
- Non-occupational risk factors at home and in community settings
- Workers' individual risk factors (e.g., older age; presence of chronic medical conditions, including immunocompromising conditions; pregnancy) and controls necessary to address those risks

Follow federal, state, local, tribal, provincial, and/or territorial (SLTT) recommendations regarding development of contingency plans for situations that may arise because of outbreaks, such as:

- Increased rates of worker absenteeism
- The need for social distancing, staggered work shifts, downsizing operations, delivering services remotely, and other exposure-reducing measures
- Options for conducting essential operations with a reduced workforce, including cross-training workers across different jobs to continue operations.
- Interrupted supply chains or delayed deliveries

Plans should also consider and address the other steps that employers can take to reduce the risk of worker exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in their workplace, described in the sections below.

PREPARE TO IMPLEMENT BASIC INFECTION PREVENTION MEASURES

For most Pet Services providers, protecting workers will depend on emphasizing basic infection prevention measures. As appropriate, all employers should implement good hygiene and infection control practices, including:

- Promote frequent and thorough hand washing, including by providing workers, customers, and worksite visitors with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Encourage workers to stay at home if they are sick.
- Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes properly.
- Employers should explore whether they can establish, policies and practices, such as flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and the use of social distancing strategies.
- Discourage employees from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
- Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use of all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, PPE.)

DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR PROMPT IDENTIFICATION AND ISOLATION OF SICK PEOPLE, IF APPROPRIATE

- Prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a critical step in protecting workers, customers, visitors, and others at a worksite.
- Employers should inform and encourage employees to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 if they suspect possible exposure.
- Employers should develop policies and procedures for employees to report when they are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Where appropriate, employers should develop policies and procedures for immediately isolating people who have signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19, and train workers to implement them. Move potentially infectious people to a location away from workers, customers, and other visitors. Although most worksites do not have specific isolation rooms, designated areas with closable doors may serve as isolation rooms until potentially sick people can be removed from the worksite.
- Take steps to limit spread of the respiratory secretions of a person who may have COVID-19. Provide a face mask, if feasible and available. The mask acts to contain potentially infectious respiratory secretions at the source (i.e., the person's nose and mouth.)

DEVELOP, IMPLEMENT, AND COMMUNCIATE ABOUT WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITIES AND PROTECTIONS

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.
- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent so that employees are aware of these policies.
- 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.
- Be aware of workers' concerns about pay, leave, safety, health, and other issues that may arise during infectious disease outbreaks. Provide adequate, usable, and appropriate training, education, and informational material about business-essential job functions and worker health and safety, including proper hygiene practices and the use of any workplace controls (including PPE). Informed workers who feel safe at work are less likely to be unnecessarily absent.

SUMMARY

This guidance details key measures for limiting coronavirus's spread, including ensuring infected or potentially infected people are not in the workplace, implementing and following physical distancing protocols, and using face coverings. It also provides guidance on use of Personal Protective Equipment, good hygiene, and routine cleaning. The goal is to provide safe and healthy workplace environments for employees.