1. WHAT TO DO IF AN EMPLOYEE COMES TO WORK WITH SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

A. What are the typical symptoms of COVID-19?

According to the CDC’s website, symptoms include:

- Fever (or chills)
- Dry Cough
- Shortness of Breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or bluish lips or face (emergency warning signs)

B. Can I send an employee home who exhibits these symptoms?

Yes. You are required to maintain a safe and healthy workplace for employees, and the CDC states that employees who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should leave the workplace. If an employee has a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, the employee should be sent home immediately. If an employee has no fever, but is exhibiting two or more of the other symptoms, the employee should be sent home immediately.

Employees who insist that they are suffering from a cold or allergies should be sent home. You cannot distinguish the symptoms of a cold or flu from COVID-19.

If an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, the employee can return to work after they have provided test results reflecting that they have tested negative for COVID-19, or with a physician’s certification.

Employees with symptoms of COVID-19 who have not been tested should remain home until seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared and they have had no fever and no respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) for at least 72 hours without using fever-reducing medications.

C. Can I take an employee’s temperature?

Yes. You may measure an employee’s temperature but doing so requires a no-touch thermometer provided by the City’s Environmental Health and Safety Division and compliance with City-issued protocols. If you want to take an employee’s temperature, contact the Safety Division of Human Resources.

Employee test results must be maintained as a confidential medical record.

D. If someone is sent home, do we need to disinfect their workspace?

Yes. Contact Sharneel Kumar at 916-808-5872 to have the affected workspace cleaned.
E. Who do I notify if I send an employee home with symptoms of COVID-19?

Notify your department director immediately.

2. WHAT CAN I ASK AN EMPLOYEE CALLING IN SICK?

A. If an employee calls in sick, can I ask questions about their symptoms to determine if they might have COVID-19?

Yes. You can ask employees whether they have fever, chills, dry cough, or shortness of breath. This information must be maintained as a confidential medical record.

B. Can I ask an employee if they tested positive for COVID-19?

Yes. You can ask an employee if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. This information is necessary to make decisions about who does or does not report to work in order to maintain a safe workplace. This information must be maintained as a confidential medical record.

If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19 or has been directed by a medical professional to self-quarantine, ask them who in the workplace they have been in close contact with in the prior 14 days.

C. Can I ask an employee what their underlying medical condition is?

No. You cannot ask an employee about other medical conditions. You may only ask if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with anyone who is exhibiting symptoms. This information must be maintained as a confidential medical record.

If an employee has a pre-existing condition, including an underlying health condition or compromised immune system, the employee may request a reasonable accommodation (such as the ability to telecommute). If an employee requests a reasonable accommodation, you should immediately communicate with Human Resources.

D. Can I ask an employee to be tested for COVID-19 because they have flu-like symptoms?

You can ask them to seek medical attention and get tested, but you cannot require an employee to be tested.

But if an employee has COVID-19 symptoms (see FAQ 1 above), they should be sent home immediately.
3. WHAT DO I DO IF AN EMPLOYEE COMES IN CONTACT WITH SOMEONE WITH COVID-19, IS QUARANTINED, OR HAS COVID-19?

A. What information can I reveal if an employee is quarantined, tests positive for COVID-19, or has come in contact with someone who has COVID-19?

You cannot identify such an employee by name in the workplace – it is important to protect their privacy and comply with privacy laws.

Immediately consult with your supervisor who will coordinate with the City Manager’s Office prior to making any announcement that an employee has tested positive or has been quarantined. If you have to ascertain who may have been exposed to the sick employee, consult with your supervisor who will coordinate with the City Manager’s Office to determine what to disclose and to whom for the limited purpose of determining who the employee had contact with during the preceding 14 days. Any disclosure must be narrow and based on the need to maintain a safe workplace.

B. Do I need to send home an employee who was exposed to COVID-19?

No, as long as the employee has no symptoms of COVID-19. But the employee must monitor their temperature twice a day, including once before reporting to work.

C. Should employees returning from international travel come to work?

The CDC advises that all individuals returning from international travel should self-isolate for 14 days.

4. HOW CAN I KEEP MY EMPLOYEES SAFE?

A. I supervise employees who cannot telecommute, what steps can I take to protect them?

(1) Encourage employees to stay home if they are sick;
(2) Send employees with symptoms of COVID-19 home immediately;
(3) Continue to provide information and training on social distancing while at work, including staying six-feet apart when possible, washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as frequently as possible or using hand sanitizer, covering coughs or sneezes (into the sleeve, elbow, or tissue, not hands), regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces, and not shaking hands; and
(4) Implement flexible hours when possible to increase physical distance between employees, so long as the hours are consistent with applicable labor agreements.
B. Can an employee refuse to come to work because they are afraid of being exposed to COVID-19?

If an employee is afraid of contracting the virus and is not symptomatic or part of a high-risk group themselves, they can utilize any accrued leave or unpaid leave, subject to supervisor approval.

C. Can an employee refuse to come to work because they live with someone who is in a high-risk category?

If an employee is afraid of contracting the virus and passing it along to a loved one in the high-risk category but is not symptomatic or part of a high-risk group themselves, they can utilize any accrued leave or request unpaid leave, subject to supervisor approval.

D. If an employee utilizes unpaid leave for the reasons stated in B or C above, will they be required to pay for their health benefits?

Yes, employees will be required to reimburse the City for health benefits while on unpaid leave.

5. WHEN CAN EMPLOYEES RETURN TO WORK?

A. What documentation must an employee provide before returning to work?

If an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, the employee can return to work after they have provided test results reflecting that they have tested negative for COVID-19, or with a physician’s certification.

Employees with symptoms of COVID-19 who have not been tested should remain home until seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared and they have had no fever and no respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) for at least 72 hours without using fever-reducing medications.

B. If I am having difficulty staffing my work group due to COVID-19 related leaves of absence, can I require employees to return?

Maybe. If an employee is not at work due to fears of contracting COVID-19, but has no order to quarantine or self-isolate and has not requested a reasonable accommodation based on being a member of a high-risk group, you may be allowed to terminate any leave of absence and require the employee to return to work. If an employee refuses to return to work, contact Human Resources.

If you find that this FAQ does not answer your COVID-19 related workplace questions, please contact Human Resources with your question or for clarification.