COVID-19 Role of Public Health in Case and Contact Follow-up
Q&A for Employers

Q.1   What happens when an employee has tested positive for COVID-19?

A.1   Public Health is notified of all positive cases of COVID-19 through automated processes with local labs and the Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory.

Public Health contacts the case as soon as possible to determine their history of symptoms and inquire about their history of potential exposures (e.g. travel, attendance at mass gatherings, contact with a person ill with COVID-19). They will also inquire about opportunities for spread. They will identify persons and places they may have seen while they were able to spread the virus.

From this investigation, they develop a list of persons who may be contacts and prioritizes them based on those who may be most at risk of being infected with the virus. They then start calling all contacts in order of priority and inform each of them they have been exposed to the virus. The identity of the positive case is not revealed. The contacts are offered information and guidance based on their situation. This will mean either testing, self-isolation or self-monitoring.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit the [Government of Saskatchewan's COVID-19 site](#).

Q.2   If an employer knows that an employee has tested positive and feels they need to take immediate action to reduce risk, can they reach out to employees while maintaining confidentiality? *(i.e., employer proactively sends some staff home to self-isolate and wait for direction from Public Health in advance of Public Health reaching out.)*

A.2   The employer may advise staff that there is a positive case of COVID-19 in the workplace without revealing information regarding the case. Let employees know the measures that the business is taking to ensure their safety. Advise employees that they may be contacted by public health if they have been named as a contact. In some situations, the workplace may not be an issue because the person was not infectious while at work.

If possible, have as many employees as possible work remotely and self-monitor for symptoms. Public Health will work with you to determine if you should shut down the business.

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Q.3 How can an employer assist Public Health to ensure that information provided by the employee regarding potential contacts is complete?

A.3 Public Health gathers information on contacts from the positive case. There will likely be more contacts than those at the workplace. If the workplace is impacted, Public Health may consult with the employer after speaking with and obtaining consent from the employee. If other employees are impacted, Public Health will direct the actions required and will do so in consultation with the employer.

Q.4 As an employer, should I disclose that an employee is being tested or has tested positive for COVID-19?

A.4 No, the results of the test are provided to Public Health. If the test is positive, Public Health will determine the contacts as above and will advise them. It is not the employer's responsibility to disclose this information.

Q.5 An employee just came back from travel outside of Canada and is returning to work, as an employer what should I do?

A.5 Advise the employee that it is mandatory that anyone arriving in Saskatchewan from outside of Canada self-isolate and monitor symptoms for 14 days upon their arrival. If they develop any symptoms, they are to contact 811 and follow their advice.

Certain essential workers are allowed an exemption to 14-day isolation if they are supervised by Infection Prevention and Control or occupational health and safety staff in the workplace, including:
- specific health care workers;
- workers who provide emergency health care services;
- workers who are essential to maintain essential services;
- workers who maintain supply chain; or
- rail, airline and transport crews.

The exemption allows for essential workers to continue work. When not working the individual should be self-isolating for the 14 day period.

Q.6 An employee tests positive for COVID-19. As an employer what should I do?

A.6 Public Health will contact the employee and advise mandatory self-isolation for 14 days. Visit the following link for more information for work places:
www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/public-health-measures/workplaces.

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Q.7   **Employees are concerned they may be a contact to someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19. What should I do?**

A.7   If staff have been identified as a contact, they will be notified by Public Health and advised what to do. If staff have further questions they can visit the [Government of Saskatchewan's COVID-19 site](#).

Encourage staff to stay at home as much as possible, to only go out for essentials, self-monitor and maintain proper physical distancing.

You may want to review your current cleaning procedures and enhance the cleaning schedule as needed. You may also want to set up hand sanitizing stations to support employees with frequent hand hygiene while at work.

Q.8   **What are the expectations for self-isolation after contact with a COVID-19 positive case, where the contact tests negative?**

A.8   If the laboratory test is negative, the individual must continue self-isolation until 14 days from the last exposure.

Q.9   **When an employee tests positive for COVID-19, what is the process for that individual to be cleared to return to work?**

A.9   An individual placed on self-isolation due to the presence of COVID-19 symptoms can stop self-isolation 14 days after the onset of their first symptoms provided they no longer have a fever and their symptoms have improved. Those who work in health care settings may need to meet additional requirements before returning to their workplace as determined by occupational health and safety staff in the workplace or Infection Prevention and Control.

Q.10 **What should an employer consider if an employee wants to disclose their personal health information, in the spirit of protecting their coworkers?**

A.10 It is the employee's right to share their information with their co-workers. If an employee discloses that they have tested positive or been named as a close contact, the employer should advise employees of the following:
- They will be contacted by Public Health if they have been named as a contact.
- If they have been exposed to anyone confirmed to have COVID-19 or to anyone with possible symptoms, they should call HealthLine 811 to determine next steps.
- If they develop symptoms, they should go to the COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool at www.saskatchewan.ca/COVID-19 and follow the directions.

Other considerations:

- Consider whether employees can work remotely.
- Design the workplace to allow for physical distancing and minimal contact between employees.
- Remind employees to stay at home as much as possible, observe physical distancing, wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and to cough and/or sneeze into a tissue or elbow.
- See WorkSafe Saskatchewan's website at www.worksafesask.ca/covid-19/what-employers-should-do/ for more information.

Q.11 Will Public Health provide information to the employer?

A.11 If the employee consents to sharing information, Public Health may consult with the employer as part of the investigation and control measures. Direction on mandatory isolation can be found at Government of Saskatchewan's COVID-19 site.

Resources:

- *Government of Saskatchewan COVID-19 website:* www.saskatchewan.ca/covid-19

- *Canadian Federation of Independent Business COVID-19 Small Business Help Centre:* www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/small-business-resources-dealing-covid-19#faq

- *WorkSafe Saskatchewan – What Employers Should Do:* www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/small-business-resources-dealing-covid-19#faq

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