

Criteria for Return to Work for Employees after an absence related to COVID-19

Updated Guidance as of 09/30/2020

The following information is provided to assist you as managers and supervisors when an employee has indicated their intent to return to work following an absence related to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Immediately upon employee notification of intent to return to work, the responsible supervisor or manager must:

1. Inform the employee they may not return to work until they have been cleared by a Postal Service physician or nurse;
2. Ask the employee for a phone number at which they can be reached;
3. Inform the employee they will be contacted by a Postal Service physician or nurse for a telephonic interview; **and** then
4. Immediately notify the District Occupational Health Nurse Administrator (OHNA) that there is an employee who has requested to return to work and provide the OHNA with the employee's contact information (if your District OHNA is not available, please contact your District HR Manager for guidance).

Employee Absence due to Close Contact Tracing or Potential Exposure

The employee can return to work after 14 days have passed since last close contact with a positive person, provided the employee has not developed COVID-19 symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19.

Employee Absence due to Symptoms of COVID-19 (without testing)

- The employee can return to work after these three things have happened:
 - Employee has had no fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of any fever-reducing medication);
AND
 - Other symptoms have improved (for example, when cough or shortness of breath has improved)*;
AND
 - At least 10 days have passed since COVID-19 symptoms first appeared.

* Loss of taste and/or smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the return to work.

Employee Absence due to a Positive Diagnosis (laboratory confirmation):

If an employee notifies you of their intent to return to work following a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 result, do not request documentation for the employee to return to work. Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and unable to provide such documentation in a timely manner due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather, you must follow the process outlined below **prior** to allowing an employee to return to work.

The **Postal Service physician or nurse** will review the information and make a final determination on the return-to-work request. Employees are not permitted to return to work without written clearance from a Postal Service physician or nurse if they have received a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 result.

For your information, per the CDC, return to work (discontinuation of isolation) should be determined using a symptom-based or time-based strategy, depending on whether the employee developed symptoms.

Employees **with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have had symptoms of COVID-19** can stop home isolation and return to work following an interview with a Postal Service physician or nurse to confirm:

- Employee has had no fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of any fever-reducing medication);
AND
- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when cough or shortness of breath has improved)*;
AND

- At least 10 days have passed since COVID-19 symptoms first appeared.

* Loss of taste and/or smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the return to work.

Employees **with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had symptoms of COVID-19** can stop home isolation and return to work following an interview with a Postal Service physician or nurse to confirm:

- 10 days have passed since the employee's positive COVID-19 test.

Contact your District HR Manager or District OHNA if you have any questions.