



March 28, 2020

**Health Advisory: Updated Protocols for Personnel in Clinical and Direct Care Settings
to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure or Infection**

OPWDD certified or operated programs may allow clinical and direct support professionals or other facility staff who have **been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19**, or who have traveled internationally in the past 14 days, to work if all the following conditions are met:

1. Furloughing such workers would result in staff shortages that would adversely impact operation of the healthcare entity.
2. Such workers, who have been contacts to confirmed or suspected cases, are **asymptomatic**.
3. Such workers, who are asymptomatic contacts of confirmed or suspected cases, should self- monitor twice a day (i.e. temperature, symptoms), and undergo temperature monitoring and symptom checks at the beginning of each shift, and at least every 12 hours during a shift.
4. Such workers, who are asymptomatic contacts of confirmed or suspected cases, should wear a facemask while working, until 14 days after the last high-risk exposure.
5. To the extent possible, direct care professionals and clinical staff working under these conditions should preferentially be assigned to patients at lower risk for severe complications (e.g. on units established for patients with confirmed COVID-19), as opposed to higher-risk patients (e.g. severely immunocompromised, elderly). As this outbreak grows, all staff will need to be assigned to treat all patients regardless of risk level.
6. Such workers allowed to return to work under these conditions should maintain self-quarantine when not at work.
7. If the workers who are asymptomatic and working under these conditions develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should immediately stop work and isolate at home. Testing should be prioritized for hospitalized health care workers. All staff with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should be managed as if they have this infection regardless of the availability of test results.

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OPWDD certified or operated programs may allow healthcare and direct support professionals and all facility staff, **with confirmed or suspected COVID-19**, to work if all the following conditions are met:

1. Furloughing such HCP would result in staff shortages that would adversely impact operation of the healthcare entity.
2. Health care and direct support professionals with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 must have maintained isolation for at least 7 days after illness onset, must have been fever-free for at least 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medications, and must have other symptoms improving.
3. If such worker is asymptomatic but tested and found to be positive, they must maintain isolation for at least 7 days after the date of the positive test and, if they develop symptoms during that time, they must maintain isolation for at least 7 days after illness onset and must have been at least 72 hours fever-free without fever reducing medications and with other symptoms improving.
4. Staff who are recovering from COVID-19 should wear a facemask while working until 14 days after onset of illness, if mild symptoms persist but are improving.
5. To the extent possible, staff working under these conditions should preferentially be assigned to patients at lower risk for severe complications (e.g. on units established for patients with confirmed COVID-19), as opposed to higher-risk patients (e.g. severely immunocompromised, elderly). As this pandemic grows, all staff will need to be assigned to treat all patients regardless of risk level.
6. HCP allowed to return to work under these conditions should maintain self-isolation when not at work.

Clinical and direct support professionals who are out of work due to isolation, or because they do not meet the above conditions for returning to work, qualify for paid sick leave benefits and their employers can provide them with a letter confirming this, which can be used to demonstrate eligibility for the benefit.

General questions or comments about this advisory can be sent to Susan Predergast, OPWDD Statewide Director of Nursing Services, at susan.b.predergast@opwdd.ny.gov.