

**To: Connecticut State Agencies**

**From: The Office of Policy & Management and the Department of Administrative Services**

**Re: Updated Guidance Regarding Matters Related to the COVID Pandemic, Informed by CDC Communication Dated December 27, 2021**

**Date: January 1, 2022**

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During the ongoing course of the pandemic, we have provided guidance to agencies and their employees, in an effort to support the health and safety of State workers and the people we serve. We continue to take our lead from Federal and State public health officials. As they learn more about the about the virus and its spread, we will update our guidance accordingly.

This communication is intended to provide the most current guidance, in light of developments from the CDC, and resulting from clinical testing shortages that stem from an increase in the COVID positivity rate through the holiday season.

A reminder: This guidance works best when we all work to protect one another from the spread of COVID. **If you are symptomatic, do not report to work.**

### **Testing**

Connecticut is currently experiencing a shortage of available COVID testing administered in clinical settings (pharmacies, physician offices, etc.). This is a result of an increase in the COVID positivity rate that has occurred during the holiday season. Therefore, as an employer, the State has made the following decisions, which will remain in effect until further notice.

#### **Acceptance of Results from a Self-Test**

The State will accept a result from a COVID self-test for these purposes –

- In support of an employee’s absence from work (for a positive test).
- As evidence that a non-vaccinated person is in compliance with State testing requirements.
  - Those employees who are non-vaccinated may photograph self-test results, and submit same to WellSpark, to document compliance with State testing requirements.
  - Those individuals who, as a result of self-test, test positive should

report and document that result in WellSpark, by uploading a photograph of the test result. Based on the positive result, such individuals may then subsequently apply for a 90-day testing waiver.

## Telework and Testing Requirements

Non-vaccinated persons who are subject to weekly COVID testing **AND** have been permitted to telework 100% through January 7, 2022 do not need to continue testing during this period. These employees must resume weekly testing when:

- The prescribed allowance for extended telework at a rate of 100% expires without an extension, or
- When the employer requires the employee to begin reporting to the physical worksite.

## Updates from the CDC

On December 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published revised instructions for persons who have contracted COVID-19, and for those who have been exposed through close contact. Per the CDC, scientific evidence demonstrates that the majority of COVID-19 transmissions occur early in the course of the illness – generally in the range of 1 to 2 days prior to experiencing symptoms to the 2 to 3 days following the onset of symptoms. Based on this evidence, the CDC has published guidance reducing the period of isolation for asymptomatic persons with COVID-19 to 5 days. They also address instructions for persons who have been exposed to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. Here is the link to the CDC communication:

[CDC Updates and Shortens Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Period for General Population | CDC Online Newsroom | CDC](#)

Based on this update from the CDC, State Agencies should begin implementing the “5-day rule” immediately for asymptomatic staff. **Please read carefully, as the guidance differentiates between those who are experiencing symptoms and those who are not.** The language from the CDC is very straightforward, see below:

### **If you are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection**

- You should not report to work.
- Consult with your employer as to whether telework may be allowed.
- Get tested as soon as possible (self-test or otherwise).
- Based on the results of the test and the course of your symptoms, follow

the advice of your healthcare provider, and the guidance outlined in this document.

**Do not report to work in person if you have symptoms of any illness.**

**If you have tested positive for COVID-19**

**Regardless of your vaccination status, you should –**

- Remain out of work for a period of 5 calendar days.
- If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolved after 5 days, you may return to work. (If you remain symptomatic, notify your HRBP immediately. If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.)
- To minimize the risk of infecting others, be especially careful regarding mask wearing and maintaining distance around others for the 5 days following your return to work.
- **Stay at home if you are still sick after 5 days, and follow the existing OLR/DAS guidance [LINK] for absence from work for a period of 14 days.**
- Continue to observe all masking and social distancing protocols that are in effect at our workplaces.

**If you were in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, the specific guidance is contingent upon your vaccination status. (Note: For purposes of this guidance, a person is “boosted” if fourteen calendar days have passed since the date they received a COVID-19 booster shot.)**

- **For persons who: 1) HAVE BEEN boosted, OR 2) completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months, OR 3) completed the primary series of the J&J vaccine within the last 2 months –**
  - You may continue to report to work, as long as you have no symptoms
  - Be especially careful regarding mask wearing and maintaining distance around others for 10 days
  - Test on day 5, if possible
  - Continue to observe all masking and social distancing protocols that are in effect at our workplaces
  - If you develop symptoms, notify your HRBP immediately. Do not report to work, and get tested as soon as possible. (If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.)

- **For persons who: 1) completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are NOT boosted, OR 2) completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are NOT boosted, or 3) are unvaccinated –**
  - Stay out of work for a period of 5 calendar days from the date you are notified of close contact
  - If you have no symptoms, you may return to work following the 5<sup>th</sup> calendar day
  - Be especially careful regarding mask wearing and maintaining distance around others for another 5 days
  - Test on day 5 if possible
  - Continue to observe all masking and social distancing protocols that are in effect at our workplaces
  - If you develop symptoms, notify your HRBP immediately. Do not report to work, and get tested as soon as possible. (If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.)

CDC advises that individuals who have had COVID-19 should isolate for 5 days (<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1227-isolation-quarantine-guidance.html>) and can return to work and other activities on day 6 or later provided they have been fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours and other symptoms are improving. CDC has advised that (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>) some symptoms may persist for weeks or months (such as residual congestion or loss of taste and smell), but the continuing presence of those symptoms need not delay the end of isolation.

Employees should continue to follow the DAS guidelines on appropriate PPE usage in the workplace, or their agency-specific guidance on PPE. Here is a reminder on the published requirements for masks that remain in effect:

- Masks are still required in common areas. DPH guidance recommends that all employees continue the practice of wearing a mask in hallways, conference rooms, elevators, and other common areas. This requirement applies to everyone, regardless of vaccination status.
- In direct care / congregate living facilities (prisons, hospitals, inpatient facilities), masks are still mandatory in accordance with CDC guidance.

Healthcare agencies are encouraged to continue to reference the CDC website for updates/changes to guidance as they pertain to healthcare workers. That link is below:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>

Please be advised that more specific guidance may be forthcoming regarding workplaces

and employee/client populations that may require other and additional safety/protection measures. We will distribute those once they become available. In addition, as conditions change, so will the guidance; we will provide updates when we receive them.