

# ESSENTIAL WORKPLACE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COVID-19

## Employee Screening and Work Practices/Exclusion

This guidance is for people who are essential workers (**excluding health care providers**) as defined by the [United States Department of Homeland Security](#).

*Critical infrastructure/essential workers, including personnel in different sectors of work including:*

- Federal, state, & local law enforcement
- 911 call center employees
- Fusion Center employees
- Hazardous material responders from government and the private sector
- Janitorial staff and other custodial staff
- Workers – including contracted vendors – in food and agriculture, critical manufacturing, informational technology, transportation, energy and government facilities

The NDDoH has developed a **Workplace Assessment for COVID-19** and issued the following guidance to help business owners, employers, non-profits, and managers make decisions that affect their individual operation and ensure continuity of essential functions. Recognizing that conditions and circumstances change daily, reach out to your local public health unit or the NDDoH Hotline at 1-866-207-2880 if you have additional questions.

## COVID-19 case or cases in North Dakota, but not identified in your community

Essential businesses may continue regular operations and standard operating procedures if cases are not occurring in your community. Businesses and employers should follow [CDC guidance](#) regarding preparing for COVID-19. Guidance includes monitoring employee sick leave, asking sick employees to stay home, social distancing, ensuring handwashing, environmental cleaning, communicating with customers, etc. When possible, employees should telework.

## COVID-19 case(s) identified in your community, but not in your workplace

Essential businesses may continue regular operations and standard operating procedures.

Businesses and employers should follow [CDC guidance](#) regarding preparing for COVID-19 AND complete the **Workplace Assessment for COVID-19**. Guidance includes monitoring employee sick leave, asking sick employees to stay home, social distancing, ensuring handwashing, environmental cleaning, communicating with customers, etc. When possible, employees should telework.

## Employee tests positive / COVID-19 case(s) in your workplace

If an employee/volunteer tests positive for COVID-19, the NDDoH will notify your place of work. If the business owner or manager is made aware of a positive COVID-19 employee prior to being contacted by the NDDoH, please immediately report the case to the NDDoH at 1-800-472-2180 or 701-328-2378.

The NDDoH recommends that the immediate office area or workspace close for at least 72 hours following a confirmed case (in an employee). Wait at least 24 hours before conducting extensive [environmental cleaning](#) in the area. The complete 72 hours will allow the NDDoH to conduct contact tracing and make recommendations for which close contacts should be quarantined and excluded from the workplace. In large, open areas sharing air ventilation, air conditioning, or air exchange or where it is difficult to close off with solid separation, consider closing the entire space for 72 hours. Complete (or review if previously completed) the **Workplace Assessment for COVID-19** prior to reopening.

The confirmed case of COVID-19 must be excluded from entering the workplace for a minimum of seven days after onset of symptoms **and** be fever-free for 72 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications) **and** have improvement of respiratory symptoms. The NDDoH will provide just-in-time guidance to the employer and the case.

If a second case occurs in an employee/volunteer within 14 days of the onset of the first case, then immediate office area or workspace closure is recommended for 14 days, in an effort to reduce spread in the facility. Extensive [environmental cleaning](#) should be conducted during this time. In large, open areas sharing air ventilation, air conditioning, or air exchange or where it is difficult to close off with solid separation, consider closing the entire space for 14 days. Complete (or review if previously completed) the **Workplace Assessment for COVID-19** prior to reopening.

If three or more cases have occurred in employees/volunteers, then ongoing spread in the workplace is likely. The NDDoH will provide guidance as to how long businesses should close when ongoing spread is identified.

## COVID-19 close contact(s) in your workplace

A close contact means being a household contact or having close contact within 12 feet for 10 minutes with an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for an exposure to an infected individual includes the period of time 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic and while the individual was contagious (at least 7 days after onset of symptoms).

Essential workers who are identified as close contacts or household contacts to a confirmed case of COVID-19 are recommended to be quarantined (must stay home) for 14 days from their last exposure to a case. Close contacts will be identified by the NDDoH during the investigation. Even if close contacts test negative during the 14 day quarantine, that does not mean that they will not go on to develop COVID-19 during the 14 days after exposure.

**The North Dakota Department of Health *strongly recommends* that all close contacts of individuals infected with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days past the last day they were in contact with the person who tested positive. The risk is high that a close contact of someone infected with COVID-19 will go on to develop COVID-19. Unless there are critical workforce shortages, close contacts to COVID-19 cases should be quarantined for 14 days.**

CDC published interim guidance for [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#). This guidance offers exceptions for critical infrastructure workers identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case suggesting essential workers may attend work if deemed necessary provided the employer take special precautions including adherence to the **Workplace Assessment for COVID-19**.

- Employees/volunteers considered [critical infrastructure workers](#) may return to work as long as they remain asymptomatic and the following safety practices are implemented by the employee and the employer:
  1. Notify: Employees should notify a supervisor and/or occupational health representative of their contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
  2. Pre-Screen: Employers should measure the employee's temperature and assess symptoms prior to them starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility.
  3. Regular Monitoring: As long as the employee doesn't have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.

4. **Wear a Mask:** The employee should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after the last exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
5. **Social Distance:** The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
6. **Disinfect and Clean Workspaces:** Extensive [environmental cleaning](#) of all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

## Exclusion of ill employee(s) in your workplace

In addition to general employer/employee health policies, businesses should exclude ill employees who meeting the following criteria:

Fever of 100.4° F **OR** the following new or worsening onset of symptoms: shortness of breath, chills, fatigue, muscle aches, headache, cough, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and loss of sense of taste and/or smell.

Employees need to be excluded until either (1) tested negative for COVID-19 **OR** (2) diagnosed by a health care provider with another illness that does not require exclusion **OR** at least 7 days have passed since onset of symptoms **AND** the employee has been fever-free for 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications **AND** symptoms are improving.

For additional information, please see the [NDDoH Factsheet for Essential Workers](#).