



# MEMO

TO: All City of Boston Employees

FROM: Justin Sterritt, Chief of Administration and Finance

SUBJECT: Update to Return to Work Guidelines Related to COVID-19 Testing or Symptoms and Temporary Modifications to City of Boston Attendance Policy

DATE: January 10, 2022

Prior to physically reporting to work for any work shift, employees should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 utilizing the [City of Boston COVID-19 Employee Self-Monitoring Checklist](#). Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (100.4° F or greater), cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

Boston Public Schools employees should follow the protocol linked [here](#). All other City Employees should **remain home and immediately notify both:** (1) their health care provider; and (2) their manager or HR Director/Personnel Officer if they are:

- Experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19;
- Test positive for COVID-19;
- Have been notified that they are a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19; or
- Believe they may be a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19.

The department will provide guidance in these cases about whether the employee can remain in the workplace after consulting with the Boston Public Health Commission through the City's public health nursing team.

## **Return to Work Guidelines**

Employees must **notify their managers, HR Directors or Personnel Officers immediately** in any of the above scenarios because, in all cases, departments must submit a case report to the City's Public Health Nurse. The Public Health Nurse will provide direction on the employee's return to work, assist with workplace contact

tracing, and notification of any workplace close contacts. **Employees will receive return to work guidance from their HR Director or Personnel Officer or the City's public health nursing team**, based on the following protocols.

## 1. Employees who experience symptoms consistent with COVID-19

Whether fully vaccinated or not, all employees who are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19:

- **Are not allowed to report to work** and, if already in the workplace, should be sent home immediately.
- **Must get tested** and remain out of work until a result is received.
  - **If the test is negative** they should remain out of work until they are free of fever and symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g., cough suppressants).
  - **If the test is positive** they must follow the Return to Work guidelines for "Employees who have a laboratory-confirmed test for COVID-19" in Section 2 below.
- All employees must fill out the [Employee Certification of Return to Work Following COVID-19 Testing or Symptoms](#) and submit it to their HR Director or Personnel Officer prior to returning to work.

## 2. Employees who have a positive laboratory test for COVID-19

Employees with a positive laboratory test for COVID-19 cannot return to work until they have completed their isolation based on the guidance below. To discuss the circumstances of their case, employees should reach out to their primary care physician.

### a. When fully vaccinated employees with a positive laboratory test can return to work.

Employees must self-isolate for a minimum of 5 days after the first positive test, if asymptomatic and fully vaccinated.

**Isolation can be discontinued after 5 days and once they have:**

- Been without fever for 24 hours (without taking fever-reducing medications); and,
- Experienced improvement in other symptoms.
- A negative rapid antigen test taken on or after day 5
- Following the 5-day isolation period, individuals must consistently wear a [well-fitting mask](#) for 5 additional days when around others (until 10 days after the first positive test date).

### b. When an unvaccinated employee with a positive laboratory test can return to work.

Employees must self-isolate for a minimum of **7 days** after a first positive test, if asymptomatic and unvaccinated.

**Isolation can be discontinued after 7 days and once they have:**

- Been without fever for 24 hours (without taking fever-reducing medications); and,
- Experienced improvement in other symptoms.
- A negative rapid antigen test taken on or after day 5
- Following the 7-day isolation period, individuals must consistently wear a [well-fitting mask](#) for 3 additional days when around others (until 10 days after the first positive test date).

**Whether or not the employee is symptomatic and/or fully vaccinated**, isolation restrictions are removed when they have completed their isolation based on this guidance. Employees must fill out the [Employee Certification of Return to Work Following COVID-19 Testing or Symptoms](#) and submit it to their HR Director/ Personnel Officers prior to returning to work.

### **3. Employees who were identified by health authorities as a close contact of someone that is positive with COVID-19 (whether a household member or not)**

#### **a. “Close contact” must be confirmed by public health authorities.**

Employees must report to their HR Director/Personnel Officer if they believe that they may have been in “close contact” with a person who is confirmed positive for COVID-19. Departmental HR Directors/Personnel Officers will seek guidance from the City Workforce & Operation (CW&O) team and, in turn, from the City’s public health nursing staff who will work closely with the BPHC to determine if the definition for a close contact has been met.

Close contacts are persons who were within 6 feet of the confirmed positive case for 15 minutes over the course of 24 hours, regardless of whether masks were worn, within 2 days of the administration of the positive test or the onset of symptoms in the confirmed case, whichever came first.

#### **b. When employees who have not been fully vaccinated can return to work:**

- Employees who are not fully vaccinated and are identified as close contacts of a COVID-19 positive individual by the COB public health nursing staff or their medical provider can return to the workplace if they:
  - have quarantined for at least 7 days from the date of the close contact if the close contact was not a household member or, if the close contact was a household member, have quarantined for at least 7 days from the date the positive household member meets the public health criteria for ending isolation;
  - are tested on day 5 of their quarantine period or later using a laboratory confirmed test (e.g., polymerase chain reaction (PCR)) or a

rapid antigen test to detect the presence of the virus;

- obtain a negative test result; and
- monitor themselves closely for symptoms for the full 10 days after the date of the close contact.
- Employees who develop symptoms should isolate, contact their health care provider and be re-tested, then follow the instructions in Section 1 above.
- Employees must fill out the [Employee Certification of Return to Work Following COVID-19 Testing or Symptoms](#) and submit it to their HR Director/Personnel Officers prior to returning to work.

**c. When employees who have been fully vaccinated can return to work:**

According to the CDC, fully vaccinated with no COVID-19-like symptoms do not need to quarantine following an exposure to an individual with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Individuals should wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others for 10 days from the date of their last close contact with someone with COVID-19. Individuals should get tested at least 5 days after exposure to confirm COVID-19 status. Fully vaccinated people who do not quarantine should still monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 10 days following an exposure. If they experience symptoms, the employee should follow the protocol outlined in Section 1 above.

**[Temporary Modifications to the City of Boston Attendance Policy](#)**

The following temporary policy modifications continue to be observed for employees who are absent due to symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and who provide medical documentation:

- Employees with insufficient sick leave and/or who have exhausted their supplemental leave will be permitted to use other leaves of absence such as personal, vacation and floating holidays with less than the forty-eight (48) hours notice;
- Consecutive absences covered by a doctor's note will be treated as one (1) instance; and
- Employees who have exhausted all leaves and fall into a sick no pay status may not be subject to discipline.

All other provisions of the City's Attendance Policy remain in full effect and employees continue to be required to follow call-in procedures.

Falsification of documentation shall be grounds for discipline, up to and including termination.

These modifications are temporary in nature and will remain in force and effect until the City deems them no longer necessary or further updates are required. If you have questions, please contact [covidleave@boston.gov](mailto:covidleave@boston.gov) or your department's HR Director or Personnel Officer.