March 19, 2020

COVID-19 Guidance for Businesses and Employers

Attention Employer:

We are receiving a lot of calls from businesses regarding COVID-19 and potential sick employees. There is much we are still learning about this new virus, so it is possible this guidance may change in the future. Based on what we know right now, this is our best advice on how to keep you and your employees healthy and limit the impact of this pandemic on our community.

Yesterday afternoon, Governor DeWine requested businesses to begin taking the temperatures of every single employee every day before they come to work. It is advised that businesses send employees home who are sick. Governor DeWine also asked businesses to aggressively clean surfaces and to have soap/hand sanitizer available for their employees.

As you may already know, the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough and shortness of breath. Runny nose, sore throat and sneezing is rare. If you believe an employee has symptoms of COVID-19, our recommendation is that you send them home. If they have serious symptoms, they should call their health care provider for medical advice.

If they are not sick enough to seek health care, they should stay home until their symptoms are gone as follows:
- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath);
- and at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

The Defiance County Health Department, along with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health recommends employers do not require a health care provider’s note to validate the illness or return to work of employees who have been sick with acute respiratory illness. Health care provider offices and medical facilities are extremely busy and most likely not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.

In addition, do not require employees with symptoms to be tested for coronavirus before returning to work. Current testing guidelines limit who is eligible for testing to the sickest and/or the most at risk of serious illness. An employee with mild symptoms may not need medical care and may not be suitable for testing. Additionally, testing employees who do not have symptoms is not effective, utilizes valuable time and resources, and is not an approved use of test kits. If you have an employee who has been seen by a health care provider and told to stay home for a period of time, we recommend you follow the health care provider’s orders.

When a person tests positive for COVID-19, we follow up with them to identify close contacts to recommend self-quarantine. We may also call their employer during the follow-up to reach the contacts and would ask that if we call you that you maintain employee privacy during that time.
Resources for Businesses:

- CDC has Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers
- Ohio Department of Health has a Businesses/Employers - COVID-19 Checklist
- Defiance County Health Department: defiancecohealth.org
- Ohio Department of Health has additional resources available at: coronavirus.ohio.gov.

If you have any questions please contact us at Defiance County Health Department, 419-784-3818 or call the Ohio Department of Health COVID-19 call center at 1-833-427-5634.

Sincerely,

Jamie Gerken, Health Commissioner
Defiance County Health Department