March 12, 2020

Dear Businesses/Employers,

Defiance County General Health District (DCGHD) is closely monitoring Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Currently, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Defiance County, however there are 5 confirmed cases in Ohio as of March 12, 2020 at 2:00pm. DCGHD is communicating with state and local partners to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and sharing prevention guidance. DCGHD is taking measures to minimize the impact within our county. DCGHD will share updated information to community partners and the public as we receive it. Enclosed with this letter is guidance for businesses/employers regarding COVID-19.

**Recommended strategies for employers to use:**

- Encourage your employees to practice good hygiene
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home
- Perform routine environmental cleaning
- Advise employees to follow travel guidance
- If possible, allow employees to work from home
- Evaluate your policies related to employee leave time in the event of household illnesses or childcare closures.

For updated information on COVID-19 can be found:

Ohio Department of Health:
[https://coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov)

Centers of Disease Control and Prevention:

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
**COVID-19 Checklist for Businesses/Employers**

**Top 10 Things You Can Do to Prepare for COVID-19**

Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton, M.D., MPH, strongly recommends that all businesses/employers immediately take the following actions:

1. Actively encourage sick employees to stay home until they are free of fever or symptoms (without the use of medication) for at least 24 hours. Do not require a healthcare provider’s note to validate the illness or return to work of employees sick with acute respiratory illness; healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.

2. Ensure that your sick leave policies are up to date, flexible, and non-punitive to allow sick employees to stay home to care for themselves, children, or other family members. Consider encouraging employees to do a self-assessment each day to check if they have any COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc.).

3. Separate employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms from other employees and send them home immediately. Restrict their access to the business until they have recovered.

4. Reinforce key messages — stay home when sick, use cough and sneeze etiquette, and practice hand hygiene — to all employees, place posters in areas where they are most likely to be seen. Provide protection supplies such as soap and water, hand sanitizer, tissues, and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.

5. Frequently perform enhanced environmental cleaning of commonly touched surfaces, such as workstations, countertops, railings, door handles, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by employees before each use.

For more information, visit: [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov)
- Be prepared to change business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations).

- Implement policies such as telework and staggered shifts to enhance distance between employees.

- Consider canceling non-essential business travel to other countries per CDC’s travel guidance.

- Remove candy dishes and limit the sharing of pens and workplace equipment.

Additional resources:
COVID-19 Information for Businesses: [https://www.tpchd.org/healthy-people/diseases/covid-19-information-for-businesses](https://www.tpchd.org/healthy-people/diseases/covid-19-information-for-businesses)
EMPLOYERS/BUSINESSES

The Ohio Department of Health asks employers and businesses to be prepared to protect employees in the event of an outbreak of any infectious disease. Please stay calm, seek out accurate information to share with employees, and be kind, staying mindful of actions that could perpetuate any discrimination or stigma associated with COVID-19 or other infectious diseases.

The below guidance was adapted March 3, 2020, from recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more detailed guidance and any updates, please visit the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov).

For additional information, also visit [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov).

- Encourage employees with symptoms of acute respiratory illness to stay home.
- Develop non-punitive, flexible sick leave policies consistent with public health guidance. Allow employees to remain home for their own or a family member’s illness or to care for a child if schools should temporarily close.
- Separate employees who have acute respiratory illness symptoms at work from others and send them home immediately.
- Ask employees who have a family member at home with COVID-19 to notify a supervisor. Refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, inform other employees of their possible exposure in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.
- Inform employees that some people may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions.
- Emphasize respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees at all times:
  - Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace and in other areas where they are likely to be seen.
  - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles employee use.
  - Maintain adequate supplies of soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace.
  - Place hand rubs in multiple locations and/or in conference rooms.
- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use cleaning agents that are usually used and follow directions on the label.
• Provide disposable wipes so employees can clean commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) before each use.

• Advise employees before traveling to check the CDC Travel Health Notices and U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories the to stay home if they are sick.

• Plan for the cancelling of non-essential travel.

• Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism or critical supply chains are interrupted.

• Consider cross-training personnel in essential roles.

• Prepare to consider cancelling large work-related meetings or events.

• Try to establish policies and practices -- such as telecommuting, web-based conferences, and flexible work hours/staggered shifts – to distance employees from others if necessary.

• Establish a process to communicate information to employees and business partners. Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation and respond with credible information.

• To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the CDC guidance to determine risk of COVID-19. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin, and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed COVID-19.
Keeping the workplace safe
Encourage your employees to...

**Practice good hygiene**
- Stop handshaking – use other noncontact methods of greeting
- Clean hands at the door and schedule regular hand washing reminders by email
- Create habits and reminders to avoid touching their faces and cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, and handrails regularly
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

**Be careful with meetings and travel**
- Use videoconferencing for meetings when possible
- When not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces
- Consider adjusting or postponing large meetings or gatherings
- Assess the risks of business travel

**Handle food carefully**
- Limit food sharing
- Strengthen health screening for cafeteria staff and their close contacts
- Ensure cafeteria staff and their close contacts practice strict hygiene

**Stay home if...**
- They are feeling sick
- They have a sick family member in their home

What every American and community can do now to decrease the spread of the coronavirus
Keeping the school safe
Encourage your faculty, staff, and students to...

Practice good hygiene
- Stop handshaking – use other noncontact methods of greeting
- Clean hands at the door and at regular intervals
- Create habits and reminders to avoid touching their faces and cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, and handrails regularly
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

Consider rearranging large activities and gatherings
- Consider adjusting or postponing gatherings that mix between classes and grades
- Adjust after-school arrangements to avoid mixing between classes and grades
- When possible, hold classes outdoors or in open, well-ventilated spaces

Handle food carefully
- Limit food sharing
- Strengthen health screening for cafeteria staff and their close contacts
- Ensure cafeteria staff and their close contacts practice strict hygiene

Stay home if...
- They are feeling sick
- They have a sick family member in their home

What every American and community can do now to decrease the spread of the coronavirus
Keeping the home safe
Encourage your family members to...

All households
- Clean hands at the door and at regular intervals
- Create habits and reminders to avoid touching their face and cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables, and handrails regularly
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

Households with vulnerable seniors or those with significant underlying conditions
*Significant underlying conditions include heart, lung, kidney disease; diabetes; and conditions that suppress the immune system*
- Have the healthy people in the household conduct themselves as if they were a significant risk to the person with underlying conditions. For example, wash hands frequently before interacting with the person, such as by feeding or caring for the person
- If possible, provide a protected space for vulnerable household members
- Ensure all utensils and surfaces are cleaned regularly

Households with sick family members
- Give sick members their own room if possible, and keep the door closed
- Have only one family member care for them
- Consider providing additional protections or more intensive care for household members over 65 years old or with underlying conditions

What every American and community can do now to decrease the spread of the coronavirus
Keeping commercial establishments safe
Encourage your employees and customers to...

**Practice good hygiene**
- Stop handshaking – use other noncontact methods of greeting
- Clean hands at the door, and schedule regular hand washing reminders by email
- Promote tap and pay to limit handling of cash
- Disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, and handrails regularly
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

**Avoid crowding**
- Use booking and scheduling to stagger customer flow
- Use online transactions where possible
- Consider limiting attendance at larger gatherings

**For transportation businesses, taxis, and ride shares**
- Keep windows open when possible
- Increase ventilation
- Regularly disinfect surfaces

What every American and community can do now to decrease the spread of the coronavirus