



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About Potential Exposure to COVID-19

What COVID-19 safety precautions will be taken if a staff member tests positive for the virus?

Once employees with possible exposure have left the impacted area(s), the area(s) will be closed off for heightened cleaning and disinfection in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocols and guidelines. This would include a deep cleaning of all touchpoints throughout the impacted area and wiping down all surfaces, including glass.

Will you begin taking temperatures for staff/public entering the building in addition to the current verbal screening?

No. At this time, the tools for that kind of screening are limited and must be reserved for facilities such as the State's hospital, where our healthcare workforce is directly caring for patients. Verbal health screenings have been rolled out to all high-traffic State agencies and operations in the core Executive Branch. It is imperative that employees provide accurate and complete information to protect the health of their colleagues. All state employees, regardless of where and when they are working, should refrain from coming to work if they know they are going to answer "Yes" to any of the RIDOH-approved screening questions featured on agency signage.

Will you identify employees who test positive for COVID-19?

Information about the risk to employees related to COVID-19 will be disclosed to the extent necessary to protect co-workers, individuals and others while complying with State and federal privacy and confidentiality laws. The State must respect the privacy rights of any employee who is directly exposed to or infected with COVID-19.

How will I really know if I have been exposed if you won't tell me who has tested positive in my building?

RIDOH has a thorough contact tracing process which helps identify people who need to isolate or self-monitor. The State also takes precautions with respect to cleaning exposed areas and directing workers to practice social distancing. Employees are the first line of defense and need to adhere to proper hand hygiene and other RIDOH- and CDC-approved practices. If you need

to take time off to address personal or family needs, talk to your supervisor about your options. The State alternatively offers leave and teleworking options for eligible candidates. If you have questions about exposure, you can also call RIDOH at 401-222-2577.

If a State employee tests positive, what is being done to determine who came into direct contact with the employee?

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) conducts a thorough contact tracing process when any Rhode Islander tests positive. The contact tracing team identifies and notifies individuals who need to isolate and self-monitor for symptoms. Governor Raimondo recently announced [new steps](#) being taken to make the contact tracing process even faster.

What should I do if I think I've been exposed to someone who tests positive?

Employees who experience the following are considered by HR to "have awareness" that they may have been exposed to or contracted COVID-19:

- a. Employees who are returning from any international travel in the last 14 days;
- b. Employees who have travelled on a cruise ship in the last 14 days;
- c. Employees who have returned from domestic travel in the 14 days (except to commute to work); and/or
- d. Employees who are aware that they have come into direct contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, or who have been notified by RIDOH of a potential exposure.

If you meet any of the above criteria or you are feeling ill, you are required to stay at home and self-monitor for any symptoms for the specified quarantine period as determined by RIDOH and the CDC. Call your supervisor and then the Division of Human Resources Disability Management Unit (DMU) at 401-574-8401.

What happens if I am asked to quarantine by RIDOH?

Employees out of work due to a potential work-related exposure are eligible for paid administrative leave. Potential non-work-related exposure resulting in quarantine or isolation will be covered by available leave options. For further information, you can review the [Personnel Rules](#) covering the following types of leave:

- Sick leave
- Family Sick Leave
- Annual leave (vacation)
- Compensatory leave Page 3 of 4 Department of Administration - Enterprise Policy
- Leave without pay
- Medical leave without pay

What do I do if I test positive for COVID-19?

Upon receiving a positive diagnosis for COVID-19, employees must:

- a. Immediately leave the workplace, and/or remain out of the workplace for the duration of their illness.
- b. Notify their immediate supervisor that they are unable to report to work. This notification should be made by speaking directly to the supervisor. If that is not possible, the employee may leave a voice or text message or email explaining why they are unable to report to work and a contact number where the employee can be reached. Understanding that the employee's medical condition may not allow them to contact their supervisor, the Division of Human Resources will make every effort to reach the employee's emergency contact if the employee has an unexplained absence from work.
- c. Call the Division of Human Resources' DMU at 401-574-8401 and provide a medical report. **This is a necessary step in the process. DMU works very closely with RIDOH to coordinate cleaning and protection of employees who may have been exposed.** DMU will provide the employee with appropriate documents as necessary, based on the information received from the physician to support the employee during their recovery.

Supervisors should report instances of absences due to COVID-19 to the agency director and DMU as soon as possible.

What if I had contact with an asymptomatic person who had potential exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19, i.e., “contacts of contacts?”

The CDC does not recommend testing, symptom monitoring, or special management for people exposed to asymptomatic people who had potential exposures to a confirmed case of COVID-19 cases, i.e., “contacts of contacts.” If an employee has contact with an asymptomatic person who is self-quarantining, that employee is not considered exposed to COVID-19 and not required to self-quarantine.

If the asymptomatic person with potential exposure to COVID-19 becomes symptomatic, the employee (contact of contact) will be required to leave the workplace, stay home, and contact their healthcare provider for guidance. The employee must immediately notify their supervisor or the agency director. The employee may discharge sick leave or other leave that they have available, or telework, if approved.

How can the State assure me that I am safe and protected if they are allowing potentially asymptomatic carriers to come to work?

The State is taking every precaution available to limit the potential for exposure of both employees and the people with whom they come in contact during the workday. We all have a part to play in that, including monitoring ourselves, limiting personal contacts, wear face coverings, and notifying your supervisors and Human Resources should you believe you've been exposed or have tested positive for COVID-19. Please wash your hands, practice social distancing and adhere to the Governor's Executive Orders at every opportunity. We should all consider ourselves the first line of defense against the spread of COVID-19.

If my colleague tested positive for COVID-19, will I be receiving a mask in the near future?

There are many steps you can take to protect yourself and others from the spread of COVID-19. We need to be practicing social distancing and washing our hands because they are the most effective preventative measures. Medical-grade masks, such as N95s, need to be preserved for health care and critical infrastructure workers. With the current medical-grade mask shortage, we need to make sure that Rhode Island's healthcare workers have enough of these types of masks to protect patients in our hospitals and care facilities.

However, we are encouraging State employees to wear cloth coverings. The purpose of wearing a cloth face covering is to limit the spread of respiratory droplets. This is simply another layer of precaution to help protect those around you. A cloth face covering can be sewn by hand or made from items such as scarfs or T-shirts. **This does not mean you should stop practicing social distancing and frequent handwashing.** It is recommended that you wash your face covering frequently – ideally after each use – or at least daily.

Once I test positive, when can I end home isolation?

People with COVID-19 who have stayed home can stop home isolation under the following conditions:

If you will NOT have a test to determine if you are still contagious, you can leave home after these three things have happened:

- You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers); AND
- Other symptoms have resolved (you have no symptoms of any kind); AND
- At least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.

If you WILL be tested to determine if you are still contagious, you can leave home after these three things have happened:

- You no longer have a fever (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers); AND
- Other symptoms have improved (example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved); AND
- You received **two** negative tests in a row, 24 hours apart.