

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Employer Toolkit

RED RIVER VALLEY COVID-19 TASKFORCE

-  Test.
-  Trace.
-  Isolate.

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A message from Fargo Cass Public Health & the Red River Valley COVID-19 Task Force -

On March 17, 2020, Fargo Cass Public Health (FCPH) activated its Department Operation Center in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Our response to the pandemic has evolved over time, in an effort to meet the ever-changing dynamics of the situation. One thing that has not evolved or changed, however, is the commitment of our organization to provide education, resources and support to our community in these unprecedented times.

The Red River Valley COVID-19 Task Force has been at work in the Fargo – Moorhead Metro area since early May, implementing a locally-developed, focused testing strategy, with the purpose of preventing and mitigating community spread of COVID-19. This is accomplished by conducting COVID-19 testing in settings where there may be an increased risk of exposure to the virus. Examples include long-term care, group homes, shelters and workplaces where COVID-19 transmission risk factors may be present. The purpose of conducting testing in these settings is to identify positive cases of the virus and support those individuals so they can successfully complete isolation, as recommended by the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH). These interventions, combined with effective contact tracing, have the potential to reduce the spread of the virus not only in the workplace, but also in the community.

To work toward reducing the spread of the virus in our communities, the task force has developed a number of COVID-19 Workplace Prevention Resources for employers which include:

- ✓ **On-site visits** to assess COVID-19 prevention measures through completion of the ND Smart Restart Workplace Assessment Tool. Prevention measures may include:
 - Creating physical distance between employees or between employees and customers.
 - Placement of signage with reminders of prevention measures.
 - Availability of hand washing stations/hand sanitizer.
 - Encouragement of employees to wear masks.
 - Assessment of how common areas such as break rooms are arranged.
 - Implementation of a schedule or system to regularly clean and disinfect high touch surfaces.

- ✓ **Coordination of COVID-19 testing** in the workplace. This testing, if indicated by the workplace assessment, combined with prevention measures, can be an effective intervention in preventing an outbreak of the virus in the workplace by identifying presence of the virus. Individuals with a positive COVID-19 test result are instructed to remain in isolation for a specified amount of time. Isolation is a prevention strategy used to separate people who are sick with the virus from health people. This strategy can be a key tool in minimizing the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace.

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Reducing the Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Workplace

Key Points & Frequently Asked Questions

An initiative of the Red River Valley COVID-19 Task Force

Key Points:

- Implementation of workplace COVID-19 prevention measures can:
 - Keep employees & customers safe
 - Support continued operations by minimizing and controlling the spread of the virus
 - Restore consumer confidence by demonstrating dedication to safety in the workplace
- When warranted, workplace COVID-19 testing, combined with effective and efficient contact tracing, can minimize the impact as well as the spread of the virus in the workplace.
- Local and state resources are available to assist employers in reducing the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) disease is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person; spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (approximately six feet). The virus is spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community (“community spread”) in many affected geographic areas. Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

What does COVID-19 mean for workplace settings?

COVID-19 can spread in all types of settings, including workplaces. Implementation of prevention measures, including testing for employees when indicated by the workplace assessment, can help to reduce the impact of the virus by detecting the virus early and preventing it from spreading.

All North Dakota workplaces are encouraged to implement recommended COVID-19 prevention measures, such as:

- Increasing physical space between employees and/or between employees and customers by marking six-foot increments.
- Posting signage at all entrances and inside the workplace, informing employees and customers of prevention measures currently in place.
- Regularly cleaning and disinfecting surfaces frequently touched by multiple people including door handles, phones, light switches and faucets.
- Providing adequate opportunities and supplies for handwashing so employees can wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Encouraging employees to wear masks or cloth face coverings, which may help prevent people who don't know they have the virus from spreading it to others.

Where are reliable, online resources?

All North Dakota businesses and industries are encouraged to implement [ND Smart Restart](#) universal protocols as well as industry-specific standards.

- ND Smart Restart Standards for all industries:
<https://ndresponse.gov/sites/www/files/documents/covid-19/ND%20Smart%20Restart/Standards%20for%20all%20Industries.pdf>
- ND Smart Restart Door Sign:
<https://ndresponse.gov/sites/www/files/documents/covid-19/ND%20Smart%20Restart/Toolkit/NDSmartRestartDoorSign.pdf>
- Workplace Assessment for COVID-19:
https://ndresponse.gov/sites/www/files/documents/covid-19/Business%20and%20Employers/Smart%20Restart/Workplace_self_assessment_ND.pdf

All North Dakota businesses and industries are encouraged to adhere to [CDC Guidelines for Businesses and Employers](#), including “Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes”:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Reopening_America_Guidance.pdf



COVID-19 Workplace Testing

When is COVID-19 workplace testing appropriate?

COVID-19 workplace testing is based on a variety of factors, including a workplace assessment, epidemiology data indicating a need for testing and availability of testing, along with capacity for processing tests at the State Lab.

Will testing my employees result in shutting my business down?

The purpose of conducting the COVID-19 workplace assessment and testing is not to close a business. The opposite is true: workplace assessment and testing can be effective tools to help slow the spread of the virus in the workplace. If the virus can be detected early, and if those who test positive can complete isolation as recommended by the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH), spread of the virus in the workplace can be minimized, thereby minimizing the overall impact of the virus in the workplace.

What are the benefits of COVID-19 workplace testing?

Conducting workplace COVID-19 testing is one way to decrease the spread of the virus within the workplace. When there is an opportunity to identify positive COVID-19 cases, those who test positive can complete isolation requirements. When a workplace is able to support an employees' need to remain in isolation for the required duration, the overall impact to the business is reduced because the virus does not have an opportunity to spread. In workplace settings where a risk of virus transmission has been identified, workplace testing among all/appropriate employees is recommended to lower the impact in the workplace.

Are multiple COVID-19 tests necessary to return to work?

The NDDoH, in accordance with guidelines from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recommends a symptom-based return-to-work strategy for employees who have tested positive for COVID-19. This means that upon release from home isolation, continued COVID-19 tests are **not** necessary for an employee to return to work. If an employee continues to test positive for COVID-19 after they are released from home isolation, their original release date will not change. An individual may continue to test positive after being formally released from isolation because the virus may continue to be present in their system. However, the individual would not continue to be infectious to others. Therefore, repeated testing after an initial positive test result is **not** recommended.

How do I arrange for COVID-19 workplace testing?

Workplaces typically licensed by local public health, including food service, lodging and childcare facilities, should contact Chris Ohman, Fargo Cass Public Health Environmental Health Practitioner, at 701.241.1396 or COhman@FargoND.gov, to inquire about a workplace assessment.

Infrastructure industries, large manufacturing facilities including meat and poultry processing manufacturers and other workplaces not typically licensed by local public health should contact Ruth Roman, Rapid Response Lead Industry Epidemiologist, at 701.214.8837 or RRoman@ND.gov, to inquire about a workplace assessment.

What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is the process of interviewing and monitoring individuals exposed to an infectious disease to ensure these individuals get proper care and treatment, and further transmission is prevented. People who are in close contact with someone infected with COVID-19 are at risk of becoming infected themselves and of potentially infecting others.

All information collected during contact tracing is kept confidential and is only used to contact appropriate individuals so they can be informed of NDDoH requirements to isolate or quarantine. Compliance with these requirements is important to continue to reduce the spread of the virus.

What factors are used to define close contact?

- Proximity, meaning a person was less than six feet away from another person.
- Duration of exposure; longer exposure times increase exposure risk.
 - An exposure is defined as 15 minutes or longer (cumulatively).
- Did the individual have symptoms? Coughing or sneezing increases the exposure risk.
- Was the individual wearing a face mask? Wearing a mask decreases but does not eliminate exposure risk.

What about household contacts?

- A household contact is anyone living in the same household as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Household contacts are required to quarantine for the same amount of time the positive case is required to isolate, **PLUS** an additional 14 days beyond that date.
- This additional quarantine period is in place to reduce the risk of household contacts of a positive case transmitting the virus in their workplace, community or other areas.

How does contact tracing work? What steps are followed?

- Identification: Once someone is confirmed as being infected with the virus, contacts are identified by asking about the person's activities and the activities and roles of the people around them.
- Listing: All persons considered to have close contact with an infected person are listed as close contacts. Efforts are made to identify every listed contact and to inform them of their status, what it means, the actions that will follow, and the importance of receiving early care if they develop symptoms. Contacts are also provided with prevention information. In some cases, quarantine or isolation is recommended for high-risk contacts.
- Follow-up: Regular follow-up is conducted with all contacts to monitor for symptoms.

How can employers support the contact tracing process?

Employers can support contact tracing by providing current contact information for employees identified as close contacts. The ability to efficiently reach close contacts is a critical step in contact tracing. Close contacts should quarantine at home for a specified period of time, which reduces spread of the virus both in the workplace and in the community.

Is an employer able to verify an employee has tested positive for COVID-19 or has been identified as a close contact?

Yes, an employer may contact the local health department to request verification, which would include the employee name and isolation/quarantine information.



Isolation for Positive COVID-19 Cases

For those with a positive COVID-19 test, what does it mean to isolate?

Isolation is a prevention strategy used to separate people who are sick with the virus from healthy people. Remain in isolation for a minimum of ten days from the beginning of symptoms and 24 hours after fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine and other symptoms have improved.

People who are in isolation should stay home. Within the home, anyone sick should be separated from other household members by staying in a separate bedroom or space and, if possible, using a separate bathroom from other members of the household.

Those in isolation should not leave their home, except to receive medical care. It is recommended to call ahead before visiting a doctor to inform them of COVID-19 positive status. Routine medical care may be postponed or done by phone or telemedicine. If the care cannot be postponed, calling ahead will allow the doctor to protect him/herself, other medical staff and other patients.

Obtain food, groceries or other supplies by ordering online or by phone and utilizing contactless delivery or by asking a friend or family member to help. It is recommended to try to stock up for the duration of isolation. This does not mean stockpile supplies. Rather, try to order a reasonable amount of supplies to last for the isolation period.

What are recommendations for those in isolation?

Those in isolation should wear a cloth face covering over their nose and mouth if they must be around other members of their household or their pets.

Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in the isolation room and bathroom. Let someone else clean and disinfect surfaces in common areas, but not the isolation sick room or bathroom. If a caregiver or other person needs to clean and disinfect a sick person's room or bathroom, they should only do so on an as-needed basis. The caregiver should wear a mask and wait as long as possible after the sick person has used the bathroom.

High-touch surfaces include phones, remote controls, counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, keyboards, tablets and bedside tables. Clean and disinfect areas that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use household cleaners and disinfectants. Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.

Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home. Wash these items thoroughly with soap and water. If available, use high-heat or sanitize settings on the dishwasher or washing machine and dry.

What is quarantine?

Quarantine is when a person who was exposed to a disease like COVID-19, but does not have symptoms, separates themselves from others for a period of time to prevent potentially spreading the disease to others. Regarding COVID-19, that period of time is 14 days from the date of the last known exposure to the virus.

Where should quarantine take place?

Those in quarantine should remain in their home during quarantine. Those who live in a home with a yard, should remain in their home or on their property. Those who live in a multifamily property like an apartment building, should remain in their unit and avoid common areas like laundry and workout rooms where it would be difficult to maintain a 6-foot distance from other tenants who are not members of the same household.

Who is allowed at the place of quarantine?

Only members of the same household are allowed at a person's place of quarantine.

What are recommendations for those in quarantine?

Individuals who have been identified by public health as a close contact to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 should remain in quarantine and stay home for 14 days from the date of the last known exposure to someone who tested positive for COVID-19.

Household contacts of a positive COVID-19 case have on-going exposure, and are therefore required to quarantine during their household members' isolation period, plus an additional 14 days. The 14-day quarantine period for household contacts begins when all positive COVID-19 cases in the household are determined to be non-infectious and have been released from isolation from public health.

Those in quarantine should monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and report any symptoms on the daily surveys that are sent by email. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, chills, sore throat, body aches, headache, diarrhea or nausea/vomiting. This list is not all-inclusive; information on additional symptoms can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Activities such as obtaining food, groceries or other supplies should be done by ordering online or by phone, and by utilizing contactless delivery of these items. If contactless delivery is not possible, it is recommended to ask a friend or family member for help, or contact Fargo Cass Public Health's Contact Tracing Team for assistance by calling 701.241.1587.

Resources for Employers

North Dakota Department of Health

The [Protect Yourself & Others](#) page of the [North Dakota Department of Health](#) website provides COVID-19 information and resources including:

- [Essential Worker Exposure Guidance](#)
- [Physical Distancing](#)
- [Food & Lodging Guidance](#)

ND Smart Restart

[ND Smart Restart](#) provides recommended protocols and industry standards for all ND workplaces. Additional information and resources include:

- [ND Smart Restart Plan](#)
- [ND Smart Restart Workplace Assessment](#)
- [ND Smart Restart – Employer/Employee FAQ](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](#) provides information and resources including:

- [Businesses and Workplaces](#)
- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- [How to Protect Yourself](#)