



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

COVID-19 Notification Protocols

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The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) is continuing to monitor the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on children, families, our staff, and partner providers throughout the state. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) are providing ongoing guidance and direction regarding necessary precautions to prevent transmission of the virus.

This document describes how the DCF Office of Human Resources (OHR) will proceed when it learns staff, while in the office, may have been exposed to an individual who is COVID-19 positive or suspected positive. This document also describes the steps that DCF staff should take if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine due to potential exposure to someone with COVID-19.

1. Policy:

Any employee, temporary employee, or contractor (staff member) who contracts COVID-19 must NOT enter the workplace and instead must contact the Office of Human Resources (OHR) as soon as possible. The staff member must tell OHR the last time they were in a DCF work location or if they used a state vehicle. OHR will direct the staff member on what conditions must be satisfied before they may return to the workplace. OHR will also inquire about any close contacts the staff member may have had in the workplace. Staff members are required to cooperate with this process.

Everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 infection or who has symptoms of COVID-19 (including those waiting for test results or who haven't been tested), regardless of vaccination status, should isolate for at least 5 full days and take additional precautions during and after isolation.

2. Procedure

Self-Reporting

If any DCF staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine because there is a suspicion of exposure to COVID-19, the person should immediately notify their Supervisor and OHR at DCFHumRes@dcf.nj.gov or call OHR Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM, at one of the below numbers:

609-256-0618

609-273-9889

609-414-6496

609-422-6668

609-468-7187

609-480-1061

609-649-8139

If you are unable to connect directly with an OHR staff member, please leave a message, and wait for a response. Please do not call multiple lines and/or leave multiple messages as that artificially increases the call volume which will further delay OHR's response. Understand that OHR is receiving hundreds of emails and calls every day. We ask that you be patient; an OHR staff member will return your call or email as soon as they can.

Staff who may have been in close contact with an individual that has a positive COVID-19 diagnosis will receive notice from OHR. Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet (2 meters) of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period, starting from two (2) days before onset of any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic staff, two (2) days prior to positive test specimen collection) until the time the staff is isolated.

Contact Tracing

OHR will conduct contact tracing with staff members who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have been in the workplace. Consistent with public health guidelines, contact tracing does not occur if a staff member reports close contact with a COVID-positive individual but has not tested positive themselves.

The purpose of contact tracing is to determine whether the COVID-positive staff member has had close contact with any other staff members, families, or other individuals in the workplace. OHR will compile a list of the names and contact information of all individuals with whom the COVID-positive staff member had close contact and will inform these individuals that they have had close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. OHR may not divulge the name of the individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 but may provide information about where and when the contact occurred. The DCF OEM will also contact the relevant local health department and/or the NJDOH to obtain additional guidance.

Staff members who are notified through this process that they are a close contact of a COVID-positive individual shall not report to the workplace until they are cleared by OHR. OHR will separately notify the staff member's supervisor that they may not report to the workplace.

Contact tracing performed by DCF is in addition to and may overlap with contact tracing performed by local health departments. Staff members should also cooperate with contract tracing performed by local health departments. DCF contact tracers will not be able to provide medical advice. Staff members should contact their personal healthcare provider with any medical questions about their exposure.

Return to the Workplace After COVID-19 Diagnosis or Exposure

Consistent with [recent guidance from the Administration](#), if a DCF staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, OHR will instruct staff, regardless of vaccination status and the type of work they perform, to:

- Stay home for 5 days; and
- If staff have no symptoms or their symptoms are resolving after 5 days, they will be returned to work; or
- If staff have a fever, they must continue to stay home until the fever resolves without fever-reducing medication.

If applicable, a DCF staff member should not be permitted to return to the workplace until the required isolation or quarantine period has expired unless the individual is otherwise exempt. DCF will attempt to accommodate the employee with remote work whenever possible. An employee who has been advised by a health care provider to isolate or quarantine, may be eligible for leave. Please contact OHR for details.

Additionally, individuals may not qualify for more than 5 days of COVID leave if their symptoms resolve or are resolving after 5 days following a positive test because they would meet the criteria for discontinuing isolation based on the new [CDC guidance](#). If staff otherwise meet the eligibility for COVID leave, they may still use COVID leave beyond 5 days with supporting medical documentation.

After returning to the workplace, staff should [self-monitor](#) for symptoms daily and adhere to all screening and infection control policies at their work location.

3. How Can You Protect Yourself?

- **Get vaccinated against COVID-19 and boosted.** At this time, all New Jersey residents ages 5 and older are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine and resident ages 12 and older are eligible for the booster 5 months after the second shot of Pfizer or Moderna, or 2 months after the single Johnson & Johnson shot.
- **Stay home** if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn [what to do if you are sick](#).

- **Wear a well-fitting mask** while at DCF worksites and while working in the field. All employees may remove their mask when they are eating or drinking, where seated at a workstation and separated from other individuals by at minimum six feet of distance, and when situated in a room alone. All individuals must wear masks in internal meetings, in common areas such as a breakroom, and on elevators when more than one individual is present.
- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Wear a **face mask** in all public settings. Click [here](#) to check out the state's COVID-19 information hub.
- When you leave home and when you are in the office, follow **social distancing** practices; do your best to put **at least 6 feet between yourself and other people**. This is especially important for [people who are at higher risk of getting very sick](#).
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick.
- **Minimize in-person socializing with colleagues**.
- **Monitor for symptoms**. Watch for fever (100.4°F or greater), cough, shortness of breath, or other COVID-19 symptoms for 10 days after close contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19. If symptoms develop, get tested and follow isolation recommendations.

4. Where Can I find More Information?

- For questions related to COVID-19, please refer to CDC [FAQs](#) on COVID-19.
- For questions related to isolation and quarantine, please refer to the January 14, 2022 NJDOH [Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Timeframes for Non-Healthcare Settings](#).
- If you or members of your family are struggling, please check out the [many resources available](#) for assistance.

5. Travel

In accordance with current [CDC guidance](#):

- **Delay travel until you are fully vaccinated.**
- Check your destination's COVID-19 situation before traveling. State, local, and territorial governments may have travel restrictions in place.
- Wearing a mask over your nose and mouth is required in indoor areas of public transportation (including airplanes) and indoors in U.S. transportation hubs (including airports).
- Do not travel if you have been exposed to COVID-19, you are sick, or if you test positive for COVID-19.
- If you are not fully vaccinated and must travel, wear a well-fitting mask and get tested both before and after your trip.

6. Vaccines and Testing

DCF staff is required to submit proof of full vaccination – including booster. Any staff that has not submitted proof that they are fully vaccinated will be required to undergo weekly testing. DCF staff that has not already submitted proof of vaccination should upload their vaccination verification by clicking on the ServiceNow link on your [myNewJersey portal page](#) as soon as possible.

All New Jersey residents ages 5 and older are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine and residents 12 and older are eligible for boosters. DCF encourages all eligible staff to register at a vaccine [location](#) to receive one of the available vaccines. OHR will ask an employee during the initial screening after a possible exposure if vaccinated against COVID-19 to determine if the employee is required to quarantine. OHR's questioning is an acceptable practice pursuant to guidance issued by the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#).

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and highly effective at preventing extreme illness. They are one of the most important tools to ending the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly encourage everyone ages 5 or older to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and booster, when applicable. You will face no out of pocket costs to receive the vaccination. You can use the [State's COVID-19 vaccine finder page](#) find available vaccination appointments at one of the 1,600+ vaccination sites in the state. Pop-up COVID-19 vaccination events, mobile vaccination clinics, and other vaccination events are being held across New Jersey- find an event near you at our [COVID-19 CommunityCalendar](#). The Vaccine Call Center is also available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM to help you book an appointment and answer questions about the vaccine. Learn more about vaccination at the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub at: [COVID-19 Vaccine \(nj.gov\)](#).

The State of New Jersey has contracted with Vault health (Vault) to provide testing services. Staff who are subject to this requirement will be required to provide a sample once a week utilizing the testing vendor's Zoom link. Vault Offers the first FDA authorized saliva test for COVID-19. The [Frequently Asked Questions](#) from Vault more fully explain what you can expect. After you have provided a sample, you may contact Vault with questions at <https://vault-health.kustomer.help/contact/contact-us-rkgRI3NgD> or at 1-800-800-5698.

In addition, please see the attached state issued Frequently Asked Questions for more information about this testing protocol. If you have questions, please contact the DCF Office of Human Resources at Zachary.vogel@dcf.nj.gov.

Please note, you may not eat, drink, smoke or brush your teeth 30 minutes prior to your appointment.

Staff who fail to comply with the testing directive, will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.