



COVID-19 Close/Casual Contact Notification Protocols

Issue Date: April 7, 2020

Updated: July 7, 2020

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 [New Jersey Department of Health \(NJ DOH\)](#) 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 will proceed when it learns staff, while in the office, may have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual. 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.

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or if you have been directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine because there is a suspicion that you may have been exposed to COVID-19, you should immediately notify DCF's Office of Human Resources at DCFhumres@dcf.nj.gov or (609) 888-7851 or (609) 888-7240 Monday-Friday 9-4 and after hours at cell numbers 609-480-1061 or 609-480-2735.

This is an important step. Central Office staff, including representatives from the Office of Human Resources (OHR), the Office of Employee Relations, the DCF Office of Emergency Management (DCFOEM) and the Office of Facilities and Support Services (OFSS) are working together to, as quickly as possible, confirm facts and coordinate the appropriate response. This includes notifying affected staff.

During this process, OHR staff will ask a series of questions related to date(s) the employee was last in the office, where he or she was in the office and with whom he or she may have come into contact. The DCFOEM will also contact the relevant local health department and/or the NJ Department of Health to obtain additional guidance.

Staff who may have been in close or casual contact with an individual that has a positive COVID-19 diagnosis will receive notice from OHR. Please note that the CDC distinguishes between close and casual contact as follows:

- Close contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time (approximately 10 minutes or more) or having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on).
- Casual contact is defined as being in the same indoor environment, like an office or a classroom, with a symptomatic or confirmed COVID-19 case. Anyone who has had casual contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case is considered “low risk”. No special precautions other than what is generally suggested, like social distancing and frequent hand washing, would be recommended.

The OHR will also notify DCF leadership, including the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, the Chief of Staff, and the Cost Center Manager. DCF Leadership will determine whether to close an office, redeploy staff, forward telephone lines and/or equipment in consultation with the OFSS.

As part of DCF’s response and preparedness efforts, the OFSS has contracted with a cleaning service to perform daily cleaning of all open DCF office locations. In addition, OFSS will, upon receiving a confirmation that a DCF staff member has been recently diagnosed with COVID-19, make immediate arrangements with the Department of Treasury to have that staff person’s office location deep cleaned. If the employee was utilizing a state vehicle, that will be deep cleaned as well. Depending upon the building, staff may be asked to vacate the premises to facilitate the cleaning process.

How Can You Protect Yourself?

- The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recently recommended](#) that people use cloth face coverings, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.
- When you leave home and when you are in the office, follow **social distancing** practices: 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](#).
- **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**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick.
- **Stay home** if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn [what to do if you are sick](#).
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.

What if I am Experiencing Symptoms?

If you are currently experiencing symptoms that you believe could be COVID-19-related please immediately contact your personal medical provider for advice. Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

It is also important that you notify any medical provider of your potential exposure to the virus before visiting them in person. Please also alert the Office of Human Resources at DCFhumres@dcf.nj.gov or (609) 888-7851 or (609) 888-7240 Monday-Friday 9-4 and after hours at cell numbers 609-480-1061 or 609-480-2735.

Where Can I find More Information?

- For questions related to COVID-19, please refer to the state's [COVID-19](#) information hub.
- For questions related to COVID-19, please refer to these [Frequently Asked Questions](#) issued by the New Jersey Department of Health.
- There is also a wealth of information on the CDC website about [preventing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities](#).
- If you or members of your family are struggling, please check out the [many resources available](#) for assistance.

Our guidance is: If you are not feeling well, please stay home and consult with your healthcare provider. We all need to take this guidance very seriously. Consult with your healthcare provider and stay at home until you receive approval to return to work. Please update the Office of Human Resources accordingly.

Travel Advisory Protocol

The State has issued a travel advisory under which individuals traveling to or returning to New Jersey from states with increasing rates of COVID-19 are advised to self-quarantine for 14 days. This includes travel by train, bus, car, plane and any other method of transportation. Please note that the [list of designated states](#) will be updated and should be checked regularly. When

an employee returns from travel to a designated state, workers are to 1) notify their supervisors 2) reach out to the Office of Human Resources at DCFhumres@dcf.nj.gov or (609) 888-7851 or (609) 888-7240 Monday-Friday 9-4 and after hours at cell numbers 609-480-1061 or 609-480-2735.

Workers should not be permitted to return to the workplace until the 14-day period has expired unless the individual is otherwise exempt. DCF will attempt to accommodate the employee with remote work wherever possible. DCF Office of Human Resources will also consider whether (1) the employee falls within an exemption outlined in the [Travel Advisory FAQs](#), and thus may be permitted to continue working subject to procedures outlined by the CDC ([here](#) and [here](#)); or (2) individuals who have traveled to a designated state have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine, and thus may be eligible for [federal leave benefits](#).