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Summary of Recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance to Mitigate Staff Shortages for Critical Infrastructure and Healthcare Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Critical Infrastructure Workers (Law Enforcement, 911, Essential Businesses, etc.)

- Typically, workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 are recommended to stay home and out of work for 14 days after the exposure.

- However, to preserve workforce capacity, recent CDC guidance now allows critical infrastructure workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 to continue working if they do not have any symptoms, wear a face mask at all times while working, and maintain 6 feet between them and their coworkers. For example, this would apply to poultry plant workers.

- The employer should follow some additional precautions to protect other workers, including: 1) screen the exposed employee for fever and symptoms each day before they are allowed to work; and, 2) clean and disinfect all shared spaces and areas daily.

- If the exposed employee develops symptoms, they should not come to work or should be sent home to isolate immediately. Supervisors and close contacts at work should be notified.


Healthcare Workers

- Typically, healthcare workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 are recommended to stay home and out of work for 14 days after the exposure, and healthcare workers who test positive for COVID-19 infection are recommended to isolate at home for a minimum of 7 days.

- However, to mitigate potential staffing shortages that this may cause as the pandemic continues, CDC has recently developed new guidance designed to better preserve workforce capacity while also protecting other personnel and patients. Now, if needed:
  
  o Healthcare workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 can return to work if they do not have any symptoms AND wear a facemask at all times for 14 days
after the exposure. They should not provide care for persons with weakened immune systems. They must practice stringent hand hygiene, must monitor their health closely, and leave work immediately (or don’t come to work) if they develop fever or other symptoms.

- In a dire staffing shortage, facilities could consider allowing healthcare workers who test positive for COVID-19 to return to work if they are well enough to do so AND they wear a facemask at all times while working. They should ideally perform job duties that do not require interacting with others; or if that is not possible, provide care for patients who are positive for COVID-19. They should not provide care for persons with weakened immune systems. They must practice stringent hand and respiratory hygiene, must monitor their health diligently and leave work immediately (or don’t come to work) if symptoms worsen.

Full guidance can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/mitigating-staff-shortages.html