

HR Insights

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Responding to an Employee's Positive Coronavirus Test

As the number of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases grows daily, employers across the country are dealing with the difficult situation of responding to an employee's positive COVID-19 test.

Employers are responsible for handling the situation swiftly to protect the health of other employees while preserving the affected employee's confidentiality. In addition to notifying the company and its customers, employers must also disinfect the office and evaluate next steps.

If you're in this situation, you may be wondering what you need to do. This article provides an overview of how you can respond to finding out an employee has COVID-19.

Responding to the Employee

When an employee notifies you that he or she is sick with COVID-19, you should respond calmly and empathetically. In these uncertain times, it can be easy to overreact, but you need to ensure that the infected employee is treated with compassion. Reassure the employee that their identity will remain confidential, and be sure to help them coordinate taking leave or paid time off until they've recovered.

You will also need to ask the employee some potentially difficult questions, including whom the employee has been in contact with in the last two weeks. Obtaining this information is essential so that you can directly notify customers and other

employees that they may have been directly exposed to COVID-19.

Notifying Employees and Customers

Without disclosing the identity of the infected employee, you need to notify their co-workers, customers and the rest of the company.

Directly notify any co-workers or customers whom the ill employee had been in contact with. Be sure to remain calm and let them know that someone they have been in contact with or has been in their physical work area has tested positive for COVID-19. Recommend that they should self-quarantine for the next 14 days and monitor themselves for the symptoms of COVID-19. If feasible, allow eligible employees to work from home during this time.

Be sure to notify the rest of the company by email or letter that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19. Remember to keep the employee's identity protected and be transparent about your response. The communication should include what steps your company will be taking to protect the health of other employees. If you plan on having employees work from home for the next 14 days or closing the office, this information should be disclosed in the communication.

