Managing People

**What to do if an employee tests positive for COVID or has a quarantine/isolation order**

The employee may self-disclose medical information with anyone of their choosing; however, ADA does not permit employers, regardless of how the information was obtained, to disclose an employee’s medical information to an employee’s colleagues, customers, or vendors. Employers can generally inform colleagues, customers, or vendors that an “employee has tested positive for COVID-19” or that an employee “has been exposed to COVID-19.” The employee(s) should not be identified and identifying information should not be provided. Employers may and should report a positive test result to public health officials.

It is important for supervisors and human resources representatives to know how to report (1) employees who have confirmed cases of COVID-19 and (2) employees whom have been ordered to isolate or quarantine based on known or suspected exposure to the virus. Employees, supervisors and human resources representatives are responsible for reporting employees with confirmed COVID-19 test results through appropriate channels. For specific information on the process for handling confirmed cases and orders of isolation/quarantine go to [Guidance for Human Resources Representatives and Supervisors for COVID-19 Positive, Quarantined, or Isolated Employees](#). This internal reporting protocol is designed to protect the privacy of affected employees while at the same time, permitting Cornell to implement proper space disinfection and other safety measures.

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**Reactivation Planning**

In March 2020, the majority of the workforce was required to quickly transition to remote work without advance notice. At this time, Cornell encourages unit leadership to begin evaluating their remote working arrangements to maximize the effectiveness of this approach moving forward. As each unit develops their reactivation plan, they must identify which members of their workforce will be asked to return to work on campus in each phase.

Once a reactivation plan is approved, unit leadership should communicate these decisions to their managers. Though the timing of the different reopening phases may change due to new occurrences of infection, managers are expected to provide employees with information about their expected return to work date.

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**Employees Working on Campus**

For employees who are working on campus, managers should review the expectations including Daily Check, surveillance testing, and personal health practices.

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**Employees Working Remotely**

For employees whose anticipated return to on-campus work is planned for later in the reentry process, managers should review with each such staff member the current status, including successes and possible improvements of remote work for the employee, supervisor, co-workers, and those they support. Long-term remote work assignments should be specified in a remote work plan. Specifically, all parties should:

- Review the Security Practices When Working From Home web page at: [https://it.cornell.edu/faculty-security-and-](https://it.cornell.edu/faculty-security-and-)
policy-staff-students/security-practices-when-working-home

- Review the Flexibility in the Workplace Policy 6.6.13. Note: a temporary exception has been made to this policy regarding the requirement that an employee must have child-care while working from home. This policy exception will likely remain in effect until the K-12 school system and community childcare options are generally available.
- Complete a Flexible Work Agreement Form which clearly outlines performance expectations, communications and needed resources for effective remote work.
- Guidance and assistance for remote workers to set up ergonomically healthy workspaces are available through the Cornell Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention Program (MIPP).

In situations where functioning remotely has worked well, it is recommended that a regular full-time or part-time remote working arrangement be considered. Some employees may be reluctant to continue remote work and express an interest in returning to campus. If the unit is scheduled for a return to campus later in the reentry plan, it might be helpful to have discussions with those employees about the differences in emergency remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing remote work. Some of these key differences include:

- COVID-19 remote work is being done as a social distancing measure. Employees are being isolated in all parts of their lives so the isolation is most likely greater than it would be when society as a whole is more open and where they can still come to campus for meetings and engage socially with others.
- The current emergency remote work situation occurred without planning or training so many employees did not have the tools or resources work effectively away from campus.
- An on-going remote work situation may not have the additional challenges of caregiving and homeschooling existing during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Many employees have a less than ideal office space (no privacy); an on-going remote work plan may be able to address some of those issues.

Best Practices for Managing Remote Teams