



REVISED
COVID-19 Protocols for Direct Care Staff to Return to Work

Revised: February 10, 2021 (new material underlined)

Health Advisory: Revised Protocols for Personnel in Clinical and Direct Care Roles in Certain Designated Residential Settings ONLY to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure or Infection

This guidance applies to residential programs licensed or certified by the New York State Office for Children and Family Services (OCFS) specifically limited to, only:

- congregate foster care,
- runaway and homeless youth, and
- juvenile detention programs.

A. Asymptomatic Staff Exposed to COVID-19

Consistent with recent CDC guidance, a program or agency may allow clinical and direct care professionals in the programs or positions described above who have **been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19** to return to work after ten (10) days of quarantine if **no symptoms** have been reported during the quarantine period and if all of the following conditions are met:

1. Personnel who have been in contact with confirmed or suspected cases are **asymptomatic**;
2. Personnel must continue symptom monitoring through Day 14. Self-monitoring should be completed twice a day (i.e., temperature, symptoms), and undergo temperature monitoring and symptom checks at the beginning of each shift, and at least every 12 hours during a shift.
3. Individuals must be counseled to continue strict adherence to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions, including hand hygiene and use of face coverings.
4. To the extent possible, direct care professionals and clinical staff working under these conditions should be assigned to individuals at lower risk for severe complications, as opposed to higher-risk residents (e.g., residents who are severely immunocompromised).
5. Personnel allowed to return to work under these conditions should maintain self-quarantine through Day 14 when not at work.
6. At any time, if these personnel develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they must immediately stop working and isolate at home. All staff with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should be immediately instructed to contact their local public health authority or their healthcare provider to report this change in clinical status and determine if they should seek testing.

B. Asymptomatic Staff Exposed to COVID-19 During a Staffing Shortage

A program or agency may allow clinical and direct care professionals in the programs or positions described above who have **been exposed to a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19** to return to work **before ten (10) days of quarantine** if **no symptoms** have been reported during the quarantine period and if all of the following conditions are met:

1. Furloughing such personnel would result in staff shortages that would adversely affect the health and safety of individuals served by the facility;
 - The program or agency must submit a completed attestation, acknowledging that the agency has implemented or attempted staffing shortage mitigation efforts and is experiencing a staffing shortage that threatens provision of essential services and that all of the below factors and requirements will be or are being met. The attestation form is enclosed with this guidance. The completed attestation must be submitted to the **OCFS staff indicated below** before asymptomatic exposed staff are approved to return to any work location. One attestation may be submitted by each agency or provider operating program(s) within these parameters but must list each location/site where staffing shortages require that exposed staff return to work before 10-day quarantines are completed. If you operate more than one type of program, then multiple attestations are necessary.
 - The completed attestation should be submitted to the following contacts:
 - Foster Care: David.Bach@ocfs.ny.gov
 - Detention: Daniel.Hulihan@ocfs.ny.gov
 - Runaway and Homeless Youth: Madeline.Hehir@ocfs.ny.gov
 - Close to Home: Jewel.Brown-Gregory@ocfs.ny.gov
2. Personnel who have been in contact with confirmed or suspected cases are **asymptomatic**;
3. Personnel must continue symptom monitoring through Day 14. Self-monitoring should be completed twice a day (i.e., temperature, symptoms), including temperature monitoring and symptom checks at the beginning of each shift, and at least every 12 hours during a shift;
4. Individuals must be counseled to continue strict adherence to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions, including hand hygiene and use of face coverings;
5. Individuals must be advised that if any symptoms develop, they must immediately stop working, self-isolate at home, contact their local public health authority or their healthcare provider to report this change in clinical status and determine if they should seek testing;
 - Personnel who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate and contact their Local Department of Health (section D below);
6. To the extent possible, direct care professionals and clinical staff approved to work under these conditions should be assigned to individuals at lower risk for severe complications, as opposed to higher-risk residents (e.g., residents who are severely immunocompromised); AND
7. Personnel approved to return to work under these conditions should maintain self-quarantine through Day 14 when not at work.

C. Staff Who Travel Out of State

Staff who are asymptomatic and are returning from travel to a non-contiguous state or a country or territory subject to a CDC Level 2 or higher COVID-19 risk assessment level, or for which the COVID-19 risk level is designated by the CDC as unknown, may return to work consistent with the essential worker requirements set forth in the NYSDOH travel advisory, at: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory>.

Travelers who leave New York State for less than 24 hours do not need to obtain a diagnostic test before departing and do not need to quarantine upon return. However, such travelers must fill out the traveler form upon entry and must obtain a diagnostic test on the fourth day after arrival in New York. A copy of this form can be found at: <https://traveler.health.ny.gov/>.

D. Staff with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19

A program or agency may allow personnel with **confirmed or suspected COVID-19**, whether direct care professionals, clinical staff or other facility staff, to return to work only if all the following conditions are met:

1. To be eligible to return to work, personnel with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 must have maintained isolation for at least 10 days after illness onset, must have been fever-free for at least 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medications, and other symptoms must have improved.
2. Personnel who are severely immunocompromised as a result of medical conditions or medications should consult with a healthcare provider before returning to work. Providers should consider seeking consultation from an infectious disease expert for these cases.
3. If a staff member is asymptomatic but tested and found to be positive, they must maintain isolation for at least 10 days after the date of the positive test and, if they develop symptoms during that time, they must maintain isolation for at least 10 days after illness onset and must have been fever-free for at least 72 hours free without the use of fever reducing medications, and other symptoms must have improved.

Questions about this advisory can be sent to the following:

- Detention: Daniel.Hulihan@ocfs.ny.gov
- Runaway and Homeless Youth: Madeline.Hehir@ocfs.ny.gov
- Close to Home: Jewel.Brown-Gregory@ocfs.ny.gov
- Foster Care: David.Bach@ocfs.ny.gov, in addition please feel free to contact your regional office:
 - Albany Regional Office - John Lockwood (518) 486-7078 John.Lockwood@ocfs.ny.gov
 - Buffalo Regional Office - Amanda Darling (716) 847-3145 Amanda.Darling@ocfs.ny.gov
 - New York City Regional Office - Ronni Fuchs (212) 383-1788 Ronni.Fuchs@ocfs.ny.gov
 - Rochester Regional Office - Christopher Bruno (585) 238-8192 Christopher.Bruno@ocfs.ny.gov
 - Syracuse Regional Office - Sara Simon (315) 423-1200 Sara.Simon@ocfs.ny.gov
 - Westchester Regional Office - Sheletha Chang (914) 801-3231 Sheletha.Chang@ocfs.ny.gov
 - Native American Services - Heather LaForme (716) 847-3123 Heather.LaForme@ocfs.ny.gov