



Guidance For Employers As CDC Reduces Coronavirus Quarantine Period To 7 To 10 Days

Insights

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention just issued new guidance stating that coronavirus quarantines may be shortened to seven or 10 days under certain circumstances, down from the 14 days currently recommended, according to [media reports](#). This will permit businesses to return employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 back to work on a reduced timeframe. What do employers need to know about this encouraging development?

What Is Changing?

Dr. Henry Walke, the incident manager for the CDC's COVID-19 response, explained that the CDC continues to recommend the previous 14-day quarantine period as the best way to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. But it now offers two "acceptable alternative quarantine periods" that are almost as effective at limiting the virus's spread while having the predicted benefit of increasing compliance with quarantine procedures and cooperation with contact tracers.

- In the **first new option**, an individual may end their quarantine after seven days if they test negative for the coronavirus during the last two days of that time and report no symptoms.
- In the **second option**, the quarantine may end after 10 days if the individual continuously monitors their symptoms and has none during that period.

The CDC stressed that individuals should continue to monitor their symptoms until 14 days have elapsed, as well as wear face coverings and maintain social distancing after their quarantines end.

Why The Change?

Based on extensive modeling by the CDC and others, these shorter quarantine periods present a "small residual risk," but will also reduce the burden on individuals who quarantine, including economic hardship for those who cannot work remotely. The CDC also predicted that greater compliance with its new recommendations will outweigh the risks and overall result in fewer infections. This new development will also allow critical infrastructure employers to return employees to the workplace sooner, in light of the CDC's [recent change](#) to its stance on returning exposed, asymptomatic employees to work.

Updated Travel Guidance

With an eye toward the upcoming holidays, the CDC also recommended that Americans postpone travel and stay home to reduce the risk of contracting and spreading the coronavirus. But for individuals who choose to travel anyway, CDC issued new guidance recommending that they get tested one to three days before traveling and again three to five days after traveling. After returning from travel, individuals should “reduce nonessential activities” for seven days if they test negative for the virus or 10 days if they do not get tested.

What Should You Do?

This new guidance is a positive development for employers, especially those whose employees cannot work remotely during their quarantines. Here are some steps you can take to implement these new quarantine options in your workplace:

1. **Don't Rush the Roll Out of the New Quarantine Policy.** Going from 14 to seven days overnight will alarm employees, especially given the increasing number of COVID-19 cases nationwide. Instead, if you decide to adopt the seven- or 10-day quarantine period, wait for a week or 10 days (or longer) before implementing it. This will give you time to educate employees on why the change is being made, and how it is proper under the CDC's new guidance.
2. **Be Diligent in Cleaning the Workplace.** With exposed workers returning to your facility quicker, employees will have concerns about the safety of their workplace. Assuage those concerns by increasing the frequency of your cleaning and disinfecting schedule to maintain a safe work environment.
3. **Increase Efforts to Keep Infected Persons Out of Your Facility.** If not already doing so, screen employees and guests prior to their entrance into your facility. Encourage employees to stay home if they are not feeling well. The fewer the confirmed COVID-19 cases in your facility, the fewer employees who must be quarantined.
4. **Communication is Key.** You can never over-educate your employees on the steps you are taking during this time to keep them safe. The better they understand the virus, your response plan, and cleaning protocol, the more likely they will remain engaged and committed to maintaining a safe workplace.
5. **Follow More Stringent Local or State Guidance.** Keep abreast of local or state ordinance or laws that may conflict the CDC's new guidance on the quarantine period, including those directives addressing quarantine following travel. In the event of conflicting directives, follow the most stringent.

Fisher Phillips will continue to monitor the rapidly developing COVID-19 situation and provide updates as appropriate. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Alert System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. For a more thorough analysis of the many issues you may encounter, we recommend you review our [FP BEYOND THE CURVE: Post-Pandemic Back-To-Business FAQs For Employers](#) and our [FP Resource Center For Employers](#).

This Legal Alert provides an overview of a specific federal development. It is not intended to be, and should not be construed as, legal advice for any particular situation.

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