UW MEDICINE Guidance

What to Do When a Healthcare Worker (HCW) Diagnosed with COVID-19 Informs a Supervisor

Date: 04/06/2020; revised 04/16/2020

Background:

- UW Medicine Employee Health Clinics (EHC) are, in general, only aware of HCWs who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 if:
  - The HCW has been tested through one of the UW Medicine Staff Testing Centers, or
  - If the HCW informs the EHC that they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 at another site or facility

- When EHC is told about a HCW with COVID-19, EHC sends an email to the nursing or medical leaders of the unit/service where the HCW (who is not identified in the email) works requesting them to inform the other team members that a potential exposure has occurred, provide guidance for symptomatic staff, and provide appropriate support resources.

- In some instances, HCWs are tested through channels other than the UW Medicine Employee Testing Centers. These HCWs are encouraged to inform EHC so that:
  - Co-workers can be informed if they have been potentially exposed
  - The HCWs can be counselled on next steps should they develop signs or symptoms of COVID-19

- SKC-PHS Policy:
  - SKC-PHS does not notify the healthcare facility if a HCW tests positive for COVID-19 at another testing site (not at a UW Medicine Staff Testing Centers)
  - HCWs are not required to inform the employer that they have tested positive for COVID-19. However, if the HCW thinks they may have exposed others in the workplace they are encouraged to inform their employer

Guidance for supervisors when a HCW informs them that they have COVID-19

The supervisor should:

- Assure the employee that their privacy and personal health information will be kept confidential.
- Defer discussing the details of the employee’s illness to the Employee Health Clinic at the site of practice.
- Request the HCW to inform EHC of their diagnosis. EHC will advise the HCW on next steps and determine the potential for exposure of co-workers and patients.
- If the HCW is symptomatic and in the healthcare facility, provide the HCW with a mask and ask them to promptly leave the workplace and to seek medical care if needed.
- If the HCW reveals that they have tested positive for COVID-19 but are asymptomatic, provide the HCW with a mask and ask them to promptly leave the workplace and contact EHC for further guidance.
- Inform the HCW that the guidelines for when symptomatic and asymptomatic HCWs with COVID-19 can return to work have been updated and are outlined in the UW Medicine policy entitled: FAQ for Employees with Symptoms of an Acute Respiratory Infection and Employees without Symptoms Who have been Diagnosed with COVID-19. This policy can be found at the following website: https://one.uwmedicine.org/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx
If EHC determines that there was a potential exposure in the workplace, EHC will send the attached memo to the supervisor requesting them to:

- Inform their staff of the potential exposure without revealing the identity of the HCW.
- Advise their staff to monitor their health for the next 14 days and stay home if they develop symptoms.
- Inform their staff that HCWs who develop an acute respiratory infection may sign up for testing by completing us [UW COVID19 Testing Survey](#). 
- Inform their staff of the resources available to help them.
Dear Manager/Medical Director,

We are reaching out to let you know that one of your staff members has tested positive for COVID-19. We realize this can understandably cause anxiety in your clinic or unit. Given these concerns, we would like to emphasize that most COVID-19 cases are mild.

Please recommend that your staff monitor their health for symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and muscle aches. The incubation period for COVID-19 is 2 to 14 days after exposure; the average incubation period is approximately 5 days after exposure. If a healthcare worker (HCW) develops any of these symptoms, even if they are mild, they should stay home. Per UW Medicine policy, HCWs who are free of symptoms may continue to work their regular schedule.

HCWs who develop symptoms of respiratory infection may sign up for respiratory virus testing by completing the UW COVID19 Testing Survey. After the HCW completes the survey, the Employee Health Clinic will contact the HCW to schedule an appointment for one of our UW Medicine Employee COVID 19 Testing Clinics, located at Harborview Medical Center and UW Medical Center – Northwest campus. Please note that these staff testing centers are not currently offering testing for HCWs who are asymptomatic.

As transmission of this infection continues to increase in the community, we expect to see more cases of COVID-19. Please continue to remind your staff that they may not come to work with any symptoms of an acute respiratory illness, including fever, cough and shortness of breath.

The guidelines for when HCWs with a respiratory illness and HCWs who have diagnosed to have COVID-19 can return to work have been updated and are outlined in the UW Medicine policy entitled: FAQ for Employees with Symptoms of an Acute Respiratory Infection and Employees without Symptoms Who have been Diagnosed with COVID-19. This policy can be found at the following website: https://one.uwmedicine.org/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx

If you or your staff have further questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us, and take advantage of resources available to our community including the UW Peer-to-Peer Program and Carelink. The Washington State Department of Health has excellent patient resources for those who develop symptoms concerning for COVID-19. HCWs can also refer to our public website site that includes a current UW Medicine policy statement about staff who have been potentially exposed.

Thank you for all your dedication and tireless efforts to keep our HCWs and patients safe.

Sincerely,

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