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Notice To Employers: CDC Relaxes Quarantining and Isolation Recommendations

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Practices: Employment, Labor & Benefits

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 11, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new COVID-19 guidance which impacted existing quarantining and isolation recommendations by relaxing, or in some cases, eliminating them altogether. Under the new guidance, individuals are no longer required to quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure if they do not develop symptoms or test positive, irrespective of their vaccination status. Exposed individuals are advised to go about their daily lives while wearing a well-fitting, high-quality mask for a period of 10 days after exposure. For individuals who test positive for COVID-19, isolation at home is recommended for a period of at least 5 days. If someone with COVID-19 must be around others at home, they are advised to wear a mask until 10 days after their first positive test result, or earlier if the individual takes two rapid result tests 48 hours apart and both of those tests are negative.

CDC RECOMMENDATION REGARDING COVID-19 EXPOSURE

Individuals, regardless of vaccination status, are no longer required to quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure assuming they do not develop COVID-19 symptoms or test positive. Quarantining is a term used to refer to individuals who are exposed, but not actively ill with COVID-19. In spite of exposure, the CDC advises that such individuals can go to work, attend school, and visit other public and private settings if they wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask for 10 days after the exposure.

For any individuals who are exposed to COVID-19 and experiencing symptoms, the CDC advises that they get tested for COVID-19 five days after initial exposure. If the test results are positive, isolation is recommended. If the test results are negative, isolation is no longer needed but the individual should wear a mask. Detailed guidance on isolation is provided below.

CDC RECOMMENDATION REGARDING ISOLATION

The CDC still recommends isolation under specific circumstances. If someone tests positive for COVID-19, they should isolate at home and away from others for at least five days. If the isolating individual may still come

into occasional contact with others at home, the isolating individual should wear a high-quality mask until 10 days after first testing positive, or earlier if the individual takes two rapid result tests 48 hours apart with both of those tests being negative for COVID-19. It is highly recommended that contact with people who are likely to get very ill from COVID-19 be avoided until at least day 11 after testing positive. If symptoms happen to get worse after the isolation period ends, the isolation clock should be restarted, and the individual should consult a healthcare provider regarding when to end isolation.

CDC RECOMMENDATION REGARDING COVID-19 PREVENTION

The CDC still continues to recommend contact tracing and notification. The CDC also continues to recommend vaccination of individuals as the best form of widespread COVID-19 prevention.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

The most notable change for employers as a result of the new CDC guidance is lifting of the quarantining recommendation following COVID-19 exposure. Based on the CDC's guidance alone, exposed employees who do not develop symptoms or test positive would be free to return to work so long as they wore a well-fitting high-quality mask for 10 days. It is important to note that CDC guidance is ultimately a recommendation, but not law. With that said, CDC guidance provides employers with best practices to follow in their workplaces. Employers are free to have more restrictive standards than those contained in the CDC guidance, where permitted by law. It is also important to note that some state and local COVID-19 requirements may be more stringent than CDC guidance.

Please contact Naureen Amjad or a member of the Employment, Labor and Benefits Group with any questions.