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MEMORANDUM

TO: City of Lowell Employees
FROM: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager
CC: Lisa Golden, Director of Health and Human Services
DATE: March 3, 2022
SUBJECT: Updated COVID-19 Employee Protocols and Guidelines

This memorandum is intended to provide an update on the COVID-19-specific workplace protocols and guidelines currently in effect for City of Lowell employees. The City of Lowell's COVID-19 Executive Policy Group is closely monitoring guidelines released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) related to limiting the spread of COVID-19 to determine appropriate revisions to previously implemented employee protocols.

Throughout the month of February, COVID-19 transmission diminished significantly in Lowell and throughout the region, allowing for certain restrictions to be eased or otherwise reconsidered. This includes the use of masks in City buildings, which will no longer be required beginning on March 7, 2022, and until further notice.

Despite the reduced prevalence of COVID-19 in our community, continued adherence to certain COVID-related measures remains critical to ensure the health and wellbeing of our workforce.

In all instances, if an employee tests positive for COVID-19, is exposed to a positive case and is not vaccinated, or is exposed and develops symptoms, the Health Department must be notified to determine the appropriate course of action. The HHS Director Lisa Golden can be reached at 978-674-1050 or lgolden@lowellma.gov

QUARANTINE REQUIREMENT OF CLOSE CONTACTS

Unvaccinated, Partially Vaccinated, and Employees Whose Vaccination Status is not “Up-To-Date”

Employees that are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or whose vaccination status is not “up-to-date,”¹ are required to quarantine if they are determined to be a close contact of an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.

An employee ordered to quarantine should take a PCR test on day five after exposure, and may end quarantine on day 6 if they test negative. The Health Department will work with the individual to coordinate testing during the quarantine period. They should wear a mask while at work until day 10.

If an employee tests positive during the quarantine period, they should follow the isolation protocol detailed below.

Fully Vaccinated Employees:

Employees that are fully vaccinated **are not required to quarantine or test**, following an exposure, unless they are exhibiting symptoms. However, they should remain alert to symptoms of COVID-19 following the exposure and must contact the Health Department if symptoms appear within this period. Employees in this category should wear a mask at work for 5 days following exposure.

Employees Who Have Had COVID-19 in the last 90 days:

Employees who have had COVID-19 in the last 90 days and have recovered and returned to work **are not required to quarantine or test**, following an exposure, unless they are exhibiting symptoms. However, they should remain alert to symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following the exposure and must contact the Health Department if symptoms appear within this period.

PROTOCOL FOR POSITIVE EMPLOYEE TESTS

Any employee who received a positive COVID-19 test result must immediately notify his/her Department Head and should begin self-isolation.

The employee’s Department Head will contact the HHS Director, who will then evaluate the circumstances and determine close contacts of the employee as well as the isolation/quarantine requirements of those contacts. Any employee that is not contacted directly following an incident where an employee tests positive should assume that it has been determined that they were not among the close contacts of the employee, and will not be required to quarantine. The Health Department considers a host of factors, including time of exposure, vaccination status, social distancing, and use of face coverings, in determining contacts.

¹ Not up-to-date: having completed a Pfizer or Moderna series more than 6 months ago and have not received a booster, or received an initial Johnson & Johnson dose more than 2 months ago and have not received a booster

In order to prevent confusion and to allow for the Health Department to communicate with impacted employees effectively, an employee who has tested positive should not conduct their own outreach to coworkers who they have been in contact with prior to their positive test.

ISOLATION FOLLOWING POSITIVE TEST

Employees that test positive for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, are required to isolate at their homes and remain out of the workplace on leave for at least five days.

- Employees can return to work after isolating for 5 days **if they are asymptomatic** or if their symptoms are improving.
- If, during the 5 day quarantine period, an employee develops symptoms or symptoms do not dissipate, they must continue to quarantine until they do not have a fever for 24-hours without the use of fever reducing medicine.

Employees that test positive should remain in contact with the Health Department to determine the appropriate duration of their quarantine.

MASKS/FACE COVERINGS

As of March 7, 2022, employees and visitors are not required to wear masks in City buildings. It is recommended that individuals that are not fully vaccinated continue to wear masks in indoor settings.

PERSONAL TRAVEL

Consistent with [current travel guidelines](#) issued by the Centers for Disease Control on October 25, 2021 employees returning from international Travel are required to have proof of Negative COVID-19 test or recovery from COVID-19.

MONITORING SYMPTOMS

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, loss of taste or smell and headache. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you should remain home, monitor them, and ultimately seek testing if they continue.