



PROPOSED GUIDANCE FOR HAMILTON COUNTY REGARDING COVID-19

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STATUS OF COVID-19 IN HAMILTON COUNTY

Based on the data that we currently have in Chattanooga and Hamilton County, we know that COVID-19 is spreading in our community, especially among certain areas of the community. (1) According to the CDC, approximately 81% of people with COVID-19 are asymptomatic, or have mild to moderate symptoms. (2)

In an effort to slow further spread, limit negative economic impact, and reduce social and healthcare disparities, we want to reemphasize basic concepts for reopening and propose additional measures for our local county leaders to consider.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Refer to the Tennessee Economic Recovery Guidelines for specific industries (3) and Governor Bill Lee's Executive order No. 38 (4)



2. Provide appropriate PPE for employees, encourage use of masks, plan for appropriate spacing, consider daily symptom monitoring. (5)
3. Consider requiring/urging masks or face-coverings for customers and have a small supply available as this helps decrease transmission in settings where physical distancing is difficult to maintain. (6)
4. The recommended test for current active infection is the viral test (nucleic acid or antigen). The authors currently recommend the nasopharyngeal test as the test of choice, followed by the nasal mid-turbinate swab collected by a healthcare provider. The anterior nares swab (just inside the nostrils) requires 10-15 seconds of sampling to be adequate and therefore has limitations. (7) At this point in time, the antibody blood test is not recommended for diagnosing active infection, and its clinical significance for the general population is not yet determined. (8)
5. Employees who have symptoms of or test-confirmed COVID-19 should stay home and isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms (or date of test) before being allowed to return to work. As long as they have not had a fever or worsening symptoms in the last 3 days, they may return to work at the end of the 10 days. (9) It is the authors' opinion that following the 10-day strategy for discontinuing isolation is preferred over the testing-based strategy due to prolonged viral shedding captured by testing without sufficient evidence of transmissibility after 10 days. (10)



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6. The CDC recognizes that there may be circumstances where an employer may choose to use the test-based strategy, requiring two negative tests 24-hours apart. “Entities enacting such policies should do so explicitly, **with clear justification, and in coordination with local public health authorities.**” (11) If an employer chooses to require two negative tests before allowing employees to return to work, the employer should reach out to Dr. Paul Hendricks, Hamilton County Health Department’s Health Officer at DrPaulH@hamiltontn.gov to discuss their policy.
7. Employees who live in the same household as a person with confirmed COVID-19, or have had close contact (less than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) should self isolate for 14 days and be eligible for pay, if applicable. (12) Alternatively, if the employee is a critical infrastructure worker and is asymptomatic, they may continue to work and should monitor symptoms, wear a mask, and maintain physical distance. (13,14)
8. Pay employees who are following guidelines to remain quarantined, according to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, whether they are symptomatic, have a confirmed diagnosis, live in the same household as someone who is positive and are therefore under quarantine, or are caring for someone who is positive, among other provisions. (15,16)
9. Understand that a single negative test does not mean that a person could not test positive the next day, week, or month, so re-testing is advised if there is a new exposure or new symptoms develop



EMPLOYEES SHOULD TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

- * Stay home when feeling ill
- * Wash hands frequently
- * Avoid touching face as much as possible
- * Cover mouth with elbow when coughing or sneezing
- * Wear a face covering when at work and when in public
- * Practice safe social distancing at work and when in public
- * Abide by employer guidelines
- * Understand that a single negative test does not mean that a person could not test positive the next day, week, or month, so re-testing is advised if there is a new exposure or new symptoms develop.



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