

COVID-19 Solutions for Employers

Charleston Chamber of Commerce
June 18, 2020



Presented by David J. Fletcher, MD, MPH
Safe Works Illinois
dfletcher@safeworksillinois.com
217-855-0979

Scope of the Problem Statewide

Data as of 5/3/20

- Total cases: 61,499
- Deaths: 2,618

Because of the lethality of COVID-19 and the lack of a vaccine or recognized therapeutic cure, the COVID-19 pandemic placed undue strain on Illinois hospitals and health systems, and physicians that led to the Executive “Stay-at-Home” Order by Governor Pritzker, which is consistent with the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (the “CDC”), and has helped to “flatten the curve”.

Objectives



- Guide employers on instituting policies to help protect returning employees.
- Address strategies to facilitate return to work in a safe manner.
- Educate on what we know to date regarding testing issues.

Scope of the Problem Locally

Confirmed Champaign County COVID-19 Data as of 5/3/20

- Total: 173
- Total Tests Performed: 3820
- Active: 77
- Recovered: 90
- Deaths: 6
- Currently Hospitalized: 6



COVID-19 101

- Incubation Period
- Modes of Transmission
 - Spread from person-to-person most likely occurs during close (within 6 feet) contact with an infected person.
 - Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via droplets of respiratory secretions produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory diseases spread. These droplets are believed to enter the mouths and noses of people nearby, and can be inhaled into the nose and lungs.
- Issue of Asymptomatic Carriers
 - There is also growing evidence of transmission risk from infected persons without symptoms or before the onset of recognized symptoms.
- Immunity Issues – The presence of antibodies does not necessarily mean that someone is immune from being re-infected.

Institute Policies To Bring Back Employees

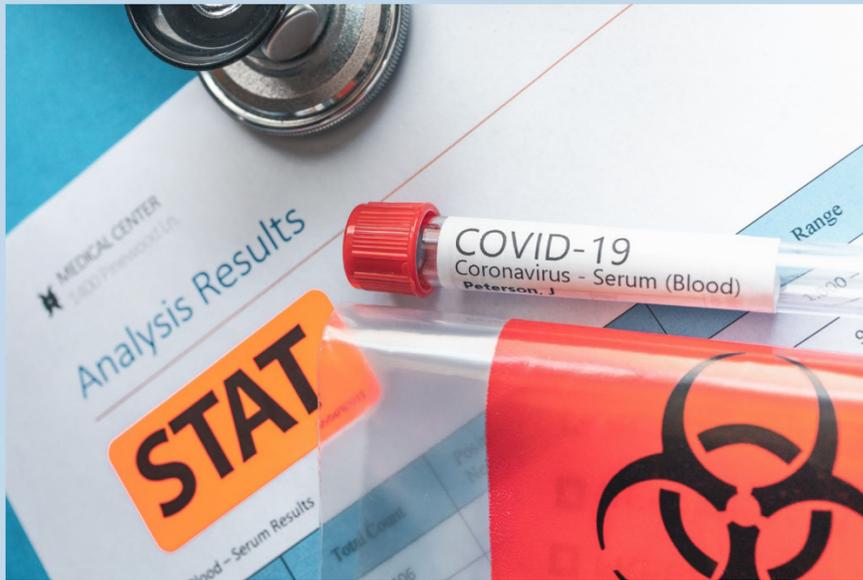
- As employers work to develop plans to “re-open” as the COVID-19 pandemic hopefully wanes this summer, employers must develop return-to-work policies that balance the safety of workers with the available evidence that individual workers are immune and/or not contagious.
- Current restrictions and other job adaptations that are appropriate include:
 - Telecommuting
 - Masking
 - Social (physical) distancing
 - Hand hygiene
 - Respiratory etiquette
 - Disinfection of surfaces
 - Exclusion of the immunocompromised and other high-risk employees

Institute Policies To Bring Back Employees (con't)

- Maintain safe distances and the use of safe hygiene practices, such as face coverings/masks, where appropriate, and hand-washing and hand sanitizers should be enforced.
- To help transition employees back to work, it is important that return-to-work policies be clear, concise, well-communicated, and consistent with federal and state guidance.



Key Metrics Criteria For Employers To Safely Return Employees



- Decreasing cases for 14 days
- Downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses (ILI) reported within a 14-day period AND
- Downward trajectory of COVID-like illnesses cases reported within a 14-day period
- Downward trajectory of documented cases within a 14-day period OR
- Downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period (flat or increasing volume of tests)
- Availability of testing

Reduce Transmission Among Employees

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever, signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member.
- Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

Separate Sick Employees

- CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately.
- Do not allow symptomatic people to physically return to work until cleared by a medical provider.
- Protect vulnerable employees (older employees and those with chronic diseases).
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality.
- Sick employees should follow the CDC's [What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).

Return To Work Issues With COVID-19 Infected Employees

When is it safe to return to work after being infected with COVID-19?

Two alternative strategies are outlined for symptomatic individuals: a test-based strategy utilizing an FDA Emergency Use Authorized molecular assay for COVID-19 (RT-PCR for SARS-CoV-2) performed on nasopharyngeal swabs, and a symptom-based strategy using symptoms and history of illness without retesting.

Test-Based Strategy

Requires work exclusion until 3 criteria are met:

- Resolution of fever without the use of antipyretics
- Improvement in respiratory symptoms
- Negative results from two consecutive molecular assays from nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected at least 24 hours apart.



Symptom-Based Strategy

Requires work exclusion until 2 criteria are met:

- 10 (ten) days have passed since symptom onset
- 3 (three) days have passed since “recovery”, which is defined as resolution of fever without using antipyretics, and improved respiratory symptoms.



Asymptomatic Infected Return-to-Work Strategy

For asymptomatic individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 via positive RT-PCR for SARS-CoV-2, the CDC also published two strategies:

- A test-based strategy with return to work following negative results from two consecutive molecular assays from nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected at least 24 hours apart
- A time-based strategy with exclusion from work for 10 days after their first positive test, assuming symptoms do not develop in that timeframe.

How And When Businesses Can Reopen Depends On A Variety Of Factors

- Delineate business-specific guidance to define and adjust to safe working distances and means to achieve workplace social distancing.
- Where social distancing is not possible due to production requirements, institute alternate means to reduce transmission risk that may be defined. This may include:
 - Personal protective equipment such as masks,
 - Engineering controls such as ventilation,
 - Administrative controls such as staggered shifts.

Develop Specific Guidance To Reduce The Potential For Workplace Transmission



Implement Guidance From The CDC, State, And Local Public Health Authorities On What Is Right For Each Individual Workplace, And Informed By Industry Best Practices

- Social distancing
- Personal protective equipment



Perform Rigorous Environmental Cleaning

Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs.



Possible options for “opening up”:

- Allow employees to return to commercial offices but restrict being open to the public.
- Allow all retail shops to open to the public but limit the number of customers at any one time based on square footage.
- Require masks and gloves for all employees.
- Allow restaurants to resume dine-in services at 50 percent occupancy with proper distancing strictly enforced, mandated masks for employees, requirement for paper menus only and other common sense guidelines.

Develop Policies & Procedures To Return Employees Back To Work Safely

What work restrictions, if any, are needed?

- Continue to **ENCOURAGE TELEWORK**, whenever possible and feasible with business operations.
- If possible, **RETURN TO WORK IN PHASES**.
- Close **COMMON AREAS** where personnel are likely to congregate and interact, or enforce strict social distancing protocols.
- Minimize **NON-ESSENTIAL TRAVEL** and adhere to CDC guidelines regarding isolation following travel.

High-Risk Individuals Delayed In Returning To Work

- Until there is a widely available vaccine, or at least a widely available effective treatment for those who fall ill, not everyone will be able to resume normal work activities.
- High risk populations will need to engage in social distancing or even remain at home entirely
- Consider special accommodations for personnel who are members of a vulnerable population.

Employee Monitoring

- Temperature checks
- Symptom checklist
- Not a panacea due to asymptomatic infected carriers



Sample Screening Documentation

On Site Monitoring:

Instructions: HCP can start work if temperature is below 37.8°C/100.0°F, and no subjective fever or any of the following symptoms are reported.

Employee ID #			Phone	Email	Job Title	Supervisor											Screening Personnel Name and Signature
Date	Time	Temp	Symptoms (check if you have any of the following)														
			Subjective Fever	Cough	Sore throat	Shortness of breath	Congested/ Runny Nose*	Chills	Unexplained Muscle aches	Headache	Unexplained Fatigue	Abdominal Pain	Nausea or Vomiting	Diarrhea	Loss of Smell or taste		Other
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

*different from pre-existing allergies

Sample COVID Health Screening Memo

Effective [date], all employees reporting to work will be screened for respiratory symptoms and have their body temperature taken as a precautionary measure to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Every employee will be screened, including having his or her temperature taken, when reporting to work. Employees should report to [location] upon arrival at work and prior to entering any other areas of [company name] property.

Each employee will be screened privately by [insert name or position] using a touchless forehead/ temporal artery thermometer. The employee's temperature and answers to respiratory symptoms questions will be documented, and the record will be maintained as a private medical record.

Time spent waiting for the health screening should be recorded as time worked for nonexempt employees.

General Health Screening

- The CDC has recommended that critical infrastructure employers screen certain exposed employees for temperature and assess symptoms, ideally before entering the facility.
- Can expand this recommendation to cover all employees and potentially customers. Employers will have to acquire temperature checking equipment and develop a process to screen individuals.
- Must establish general health screening protocols and consistently follow these protocols.
- Regular Monitoring: As long as the employee doesn't have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.

Develop And Implement Policies And Procedures For Workforce Contact Tracing Following Employee COVID-19 Positive Test

- Contact tracers investigate other employees or other people around infected employees.
- Contact tracing is key to containing the pandemic.

Concept of Herd Immunity

- What is herd immunity and why does it matter in the fight against coronavirus?
- When most of a population is immune to an infectious disease, this provides indirect protection—or herd immunity (also called herd protection)—to those who are not immune to the disease.
- There's only one possible ending to the story: We must collectively develop immunity to the disease. In lieu of a vaccine, that means most of us will need to be exposed to the virus, and some unknowably large number of us will die in the process.
- 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic infected 500 million people worldwide, which at the time was about a third of the Earth's population. More than 50 million people died of the disease, with 675,000 in the U.S. It ended because herd immunity was achieved.

What If No Vaccine Is Ever Developed?

- Instead of wiping out COVID-19, societies may instead learn to live with it. Some freedoms return, but on a short leash, if experts' recommendations are followed.
- Testing and physical tracing will become part of our lives in the short term, but in many countries, an abrupt instruction to self-isolate could come at any time.
- Treatments may be developed - but outbreaks of the disease could still occur each year, and the global death toll would continue to tick upwards.
- But the possibility is taken very seriously by many experts - because it's happened before.
- In 1984, scientists had successfully identified the virus that later became known as HIV and predicted that a preventative vaccine would be ready for testing in two years. Nearly four decades and 32 million deaths later, the world is still waiting for an HIV vaccine.

COVID-19 Testing Issues

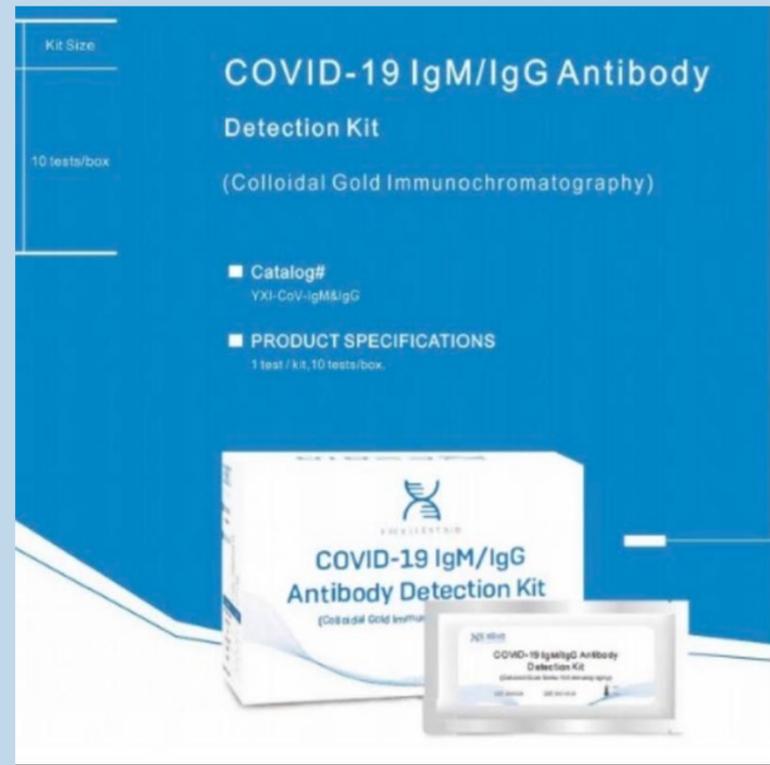
- To the extent that return to work is based on the testing of employees either for the COVID-19 virus or antibodies to COVID-19, there will have to be sufficient testing capacity, as well as clear resolution on who is responsible for administering the tests, paying for the tests, and checking test results.
- There also will need to be standardization as to when employees need to be tested, the frequency of tests (especially important if testing for infection, rather than antibodies), and the documentation employees will provide to employers.
- Frequent testing could be especially costly, and it should be determined who will bear those costs.
- Especially for employers where social distancing is not possible, employees should be routinely screened for symptoms of COVID-19, and if symptomatic, should be tested and quarantined. Accordingly, decisions about return to work must reflect a balance between test evidence of immunity and the lack of contagiousness, with the need to return employees to their jobs.

COVID-19 Testing Issues (con't)

- Testing for active viral infection and, for immunity due to past infection, are critical to return-to-work decision making.
- Currently, testing for the presence of the COVID-19 virus by means of nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal swabs is readily available and immunoglobulin blood testing
- Immunoglobulin blood tests can indicate previous infection and immunity; however, the interpretation of immunoglobulin test results remains uncertain.
- It is presumed that all positive tests reflect a history of recent COVID infection, but it is possible that some positives instead result from non-specific reactivity and/or prior infection by other coronaviruses, some of which cause the common cold
- Both types of testing active viral testing and antibody testing remain works in progress and are still limited in availability at this time with shortage of materials and staff to run them

COVID-19 Testing Issues (con't)

- Ultimately, we will need to know who is infected, who is susceptible to infection, and who is not. Need to follow evolving science in these areas to provide employers with optimal strategies.
- It is also not yet known whether all COVID patients will have normal immunoglobulin responses and whether such a response indicates the presence of long-term immunity and protection from future infection.



Resources

- [Champaign County Chamber of Commerce COVID Resources Page](#)
- [Champaign County Coronavirus Response Page](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [White House Opening Up Guidelines](#)
- [OSHA COVID-19 Resources](#)
- <https://www.osfhealthcare.org/covid19/>
- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19>
- Connect directly with the COVID-19 Nurse Hotline* by calling 1-833-OSF-KNOW (1-833-673-5669).