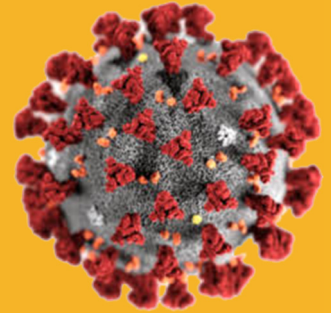




TEAMSTERS SAFETY & HEALTH COVID-19 Guidance



COVID-19 CASE INVESTIGATION AND CONTACT TRACING IN NON-HEALTHCARE WORKPLACE

October 26, 2021

COVID-19 is a nationally notifiable disease, which means, when diagnosed or identified, healthcare providers and laboratories must report this information to the state, local, and territorial (STLT) health departments. Health departments are responsible for leading case investigations, contact tracing¹, and outbreak investigations.²³ Using this reporting strategy, public health professionals can get ahead of infectious diseases, prevent further spread, and lower the need for business closures.

In general, when a COVID-19 case is identified that impacts a workplace, the health department may conduct interviews, site visits, and review records to identify close contacts who may have been exposed to the virus. If there is an agreement that the employer will identify workplace contacts, the health department will take responsibility for case investigation and contact tracing outside the workplace.

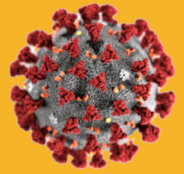
Diseases commonly performed contact tracing include novel virus infections (e.g., SARS-CoV, H1N1, and SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19), tuberculosis, vaccine-preventable infections like measles, blood-borne infections, Ebola, and some serious bacterial infections.

The IBT Safety and Health Department has developed fact sheets on COVID-19, which may be found at www.teamstersafety.org/covid-19.

¹ COVID-19 Contact Tracing | CDC

² COVID-19 Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in Non-Healthcare Workplaces: (cdc.gov)

³ When to Initiate Case Investigation and Contact Tracing Activities | CDC



Employers' Rights and Responsibilities

Contact tracing should be a part of a COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control plan developed and implemented by the employer.

“...all activities and information collected by an employer should be limited to the work setting and be consistent with applicable local, state, and federal privacy, health/medical, and workplace laws and regulations (e.g., [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#) and [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#))⁴”.

Employers can limit entry into the workplace by employees based on the employer's fitness-for-duty policies, but employers cannot ask about workers' activities or contacts outside of work.

Case Investigation and Contact Tracing

In public health, **case investigation** identifies and investigates individuals with confirmed and probable diagnoses of a reportable communicable disease, such as COVID-19.

Contact tracing follows case investigation and is a process to identify, monitor, and support individuals ("contacts") who may have been exposed to a person with a communicable disease, such as COVID-19, to prevent further spread of the population, including the workplace.

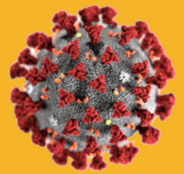
The testing laboratory is required to report a confirmed case of COVID-19 to the local health department within 24 hours. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you will then likely be contacted quickly by a public health professional to initiate contact tracing,^{5,6} a process in which the patient assists in creating a list of people they've been in contact with during a given time frame. For contact tracing to be most effective, it should be carried out as soon after diagnosis as possible. The contact tracing professional then contacts each of those people to help them know what steps to take:

- Follow-up may include testing and quarantine (separation of people who might have been exposed to COVID-19 from others) for unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated people, as well as monitoring for symptoms.
- Helping people diagnosed with COVID-19 get referrals for services and resources they may need to safely isolate (separation of people infected with the virus from people who are not infected).

⁴ [Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in Non-healthcare Workplaces: Information for Employers | CDC](#)

⁵ [COVID-19 Contact Tracing | CDC](#)

⁶ [Contact Tracing Infographic \(cdc.gov\)](#)



Close Contact

Contact tracing helps protect you, your family, and your community by:

- Notifying people who have come into close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 about their exposure.
 - **Close Contact is defined by proximity and duration of exposure:** *Someone who was less than 6 feet away from an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinical diagnosis) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, one 15 minute or three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes is close contact). An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting from 2 days before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic patients, two days before the positive specimen collection date), until 14 days or when they meet the criteria for ending isolation.⁷*

Confidentiality

During the investigation, discussions with public health workers are confidential⁸. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your healthcare provider.

Suppose a manager a manager learns that an employee has covid-19 or has symptoms associated with the disease. The manager knows they must report it but is worried about violating ADA confidentiality. What should they do?⁹

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”), which enforces the Americans with Disabilities Act (the “ADA”) and other EEO laws, addresses COVID-19-related issues affecting employers and employees in the workplace.

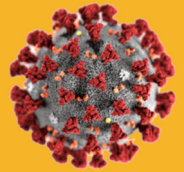
“The ADA does not interfere with employers following recommendations by the CDC¹⁰ or other public health authorities regarding whether, when, and for whom testing or other screening is appropriate. Testing administered by employers consistent with current CDC guidance will meet the ADA’s “business necessity” standard.” However, this must be done without revealing the employee’s identity, even if that information is not about a disability. The information that an employee has symptoms of, or a diagnosis of, COVID-19, is medical information.”

⁷ [Appendices | CDC](#)

⁸ [Confidentiality and Consent \(cdc.gov\)](#)

⁹ [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(eoc.gov\)](#)

¹⁰ [Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in Non-healthcare Workplaces: Information for Employers | CDC](#)



“For example, using a generic descriptor, such as telling employees that “someone at this location” or “someone on the fourth floor” has COVID-19, provides notice and does not violate the ADA’s prohibition of disclosure of confidential medical information. For small employers, coworkers might be able to figure out who the employee is, but employers in that situation are still prohibited from confirming or revealing the employee’s identity.¹¹”

The following criteria would apply to protecting medical information in the workplace:

- Who in the organization needs to know the employee's identity will depend on each workplace and why a specific official needs this information?
- Employers should make every effort to limit the number of people who get to know the employee's name.
- Also, all employer officials who are designated as needing to know an employee's identity should be specifically instructed that they must maintain the confidentiality of this information.
- Employers may want to plan what supervisors and managers should do if this situation arises and determine who will be responsible for receiving information and taking the next steps.

Recording COVID-19 Cases

Work-related cases of *COVID-19 infections and deaths* identified during the investigation are required to be recorded by employers on OSHA’s [Form 300 logs](#) if the following requirements are met: (1) the case is a confirmed case of COVID-19; (2) the case is [work-related](#); and (3) the case involves one or more [relevant recording criteria](#) (e.g., medical treatment, days away from work). Employers must follow the requirements in [29 CFR part 1904](#) when [reporting COVID-19 fatalities and hospitalizations to OSHA](#).

For concerns, questions, and information, contact the IBT Safety and Health Department at (202) 624-6960 or visit: <https://teamster.org/COVID-19>

¹¹ [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(eoc.gov\)](#)