



## **COVID-19 Policies & Guidelines**

**Updated September 14, 2022**

### **REPORTING TO WORK**

#### **1. Do I have to comply with the County's screening protocols before entering a County building?**

Yes, you must comply with all screening protocols; however you are now required to evaluate your own symptoms before reporting to work. The County of Imperial will request your symptom-free acknowledgement when reporting to your worksite. Acknowledgments can be obtained electronically (through the employee's computer log-in) or by wet-signature.

Employees who show up to work with COVID-19 symptoms will be asked to return home and directed to follow current local isolation orders. Please refer to question 5 below for additional guidance.

#### **2. If I call in sick, can my department ask me questions regarding my symptoms?**

Yes, but the inquiry must be limited. Although your department cannot ask you regarding your medical diagnosis, they can ask you if you have symptoms similar to those of COVID-19. This information is necessary to ensure the County maintains a safe and healthy working environment for our employees.

#### **3. Can my department ask me to leave work and go home if I am showing symptoms of a communicable illness?**

Yes, your department may ask you to go home if you are showing signs of a communicable disease. Given the current heightened concerns regarding COVID-19 and due to County's obligation under the California Occupational Safety and Health Act ("Cal-OSHA") to maintain safe and healthy work conditions for employees, you may be sent home.

#### **4. What if I believe it is just a cold or allergies?**

An employer cannot be reasonably expected to medically distinguish the difference between symptoms of allergies, common cold, flu or other non-serious conditions from COVID-19. It is the County's responsibility under Cal-OSHA to provide safe and healthy work conditions. To this end, the County must in a consistent manner, apply the same standard to all employees who are symptomatic and you may be sent home.



**5. If I am sent home, what is my pay status after being sent home?**

The County Executive Officer is directing Department Heads to allow the use of any accruals and in any order without the need to follow any prerequisites (such as pre-approval for the use of vacation) but only to cover any COVID-19 related leaves. However, this does not include waiving County Ordinance 3.08.230 (B) regarding the use of vacation during your initial probationary period.

Please review the updated COVID Leave Guide available online for more details. Should you not have accrued leave balances to use or should deplete them while you are out sick, please contact Human Resources.

Beginning January 1, 2021, departments may begin to enforce their attendance policies for non-COVID-19 related leaves.

**6. Can I be asked to perform duties outside my regular assignment during an emergency?**

All County employees by the nature of their employment are classified as disaster service workers. You may be called upon to perform duties other than your regular assignments to aid County emergency efforts.

**7. Can I refuse to assist in the cleaning of my work area, as recommended by the CDC?**

If you are being provided with the appropriate equipment and instructions and doing such cleaning has no known increase risk, your department has the right to request that the work be done.

**8. What if I want to take personal preventative measures at work to feel safer?**

Your department cannot prevent you from taking other personal preventive measures as long as they do not disrupt operations or create safety hazards. However, we recommend that before considering the additional measures to take, you first review the recommendations by the CDC including:

- Washing your hands frequently and thoroughly (including the top, bottom, between fingers and thumbs, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds).
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (cough or sneeze into your elbow if a tissue is not available – never into your hands).
- Not touching your face.
- Practicing good hygiene such as disinfecting common surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, and smartphones regularly.

**9. What if I have a medical condition or disability that requires that I take additional**



### **precautions at work?**

The County will review all requests for a reasonable accommodation through our usual ADA process. Contact Human Resources for additional guidance or complete the Accommodation Request Form found on our website.

### **10. Are we allowed to host potlucks in our department?**

As per current Cal/OSHA regulations, social distancing is no longer required with no further restrictions applying to potlucks.

Note: Worksites on an outbreak status may impose social distancing restrictions.

### **11. My breakroom is now open, are there any restrictions for using it?**

There are no current restrictions at common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact.

Note: Worksites on an outbreak status may impose social distancing restrictions.

### **12. Do I have to wear a face covering while at work?**

On March 1, 2022, the Face Covering Health Officer Order was amended, as it followed the February 28, 2022 California Department of Public Health (CDPH) face masking guidelines. Indoor masking is no longer required, yet strongly recommended, regardless of vaccination status.

**Note:** This guidance **does not** apply to:

- High Risk Facilities where face coverings remain required as per CDPH, such as **Public Health, Behavioral Health, Corrections, Juvenile Hall, Betty Jo Mc Neece receiving home**, and County facilities that serve as **cool centers/shelters**
- During an outbreak or outbreak watch at your worksite
- Being identified as close contact of a COVID-19 diagnosed person/employee; potential exposed at work
- During a CDPH indoor masking mandate
- If returning to work within the first 10 days from testing positive/showing symptoms

Face coverings and respirators are made available by your department upon request.

### **13. Now that face coverings are not required, can I still wear a face covering while at work?**

Yes, employees may wear their face coverings, regardless of vaccination status.



#### **14. My department is having me share a vehicle, is that allowed?**

Yes, your department may require that you share a vehicle. You may request your department to provide a respirator to use, while sharing a vehicle.

#### **15. How do I report COVID-19 exposures and possible hazards at the workplace?**

If you believe a co-worker is experiencing symptoms, makes statements that they have been exposed or you believe they are exposing you to COVID-19, notify your supervisor. We ask that you do so discretely in an effort not to invade the privacy of your co-worker. If you have specific recommendations in reducing COVID-19 hazards, please submit them in writing to your supervisor for review and consideration.

Your supervisor will evaluate the situation and determine the appropriate action based on County policies and federal, state, local orders/guidelines.

#### **16. Does the County's health plan cover COVID-19 testing?**

Yes, your Blue Shield medical plan offers regular COVID-19 testing. Please review your health plan for applicable share cost details. When taking a COVID 19 test, please provide the testing facility your Blue Shield insurance card to obtain coverage confirmation.

#### **17. Does the County offer COVID-19 testing at no cost to employees?**

The **County of Imperial** makes COVID-19 (antigen/rapid) testing available, at no cost to employees, during paid time when:

- The employee's worksite has been declared on outbreak status
- Employees have been identified as a close contact of a COVID positive case (mandatory testing on 5<sup>th</sup> day after exposure date)
- Employees are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- Employees are returning to work after testing positive for COVID, as to shortening the isolation period

Employees seeking testing due to the above reasons shall test at the following Imperial Valley Family Care Medical Group (IVFMG) locations:

##### **MD Laboratory**

516 W. Aten Road Suite 3 Imperial, CA 92251

760.355.2701

Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.



**MD Lab**

1501 Ocotillo Drive Suite D  
El Centro, CA 92243  
760.352.2270  
Monday – Thursday 7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Friday 7:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**MD Community Care Center**

608 G. Street Suite 1A  
Brawley, CA 92227  
760.351.1011  
Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**420 Heffernan Avenue Suite B1**

Calexico, CA 92231  
760.890.0321

**Note:** Employees must take their County health insurance card and ID. When applicable, notify your supervisor of your appointment, to make time off arrangements.

**18. Do I have to notify the County if I am seeking a COVID-19 test?**

Yes. It is the County's policy that employees that are seeking a COVID-19 test remain off the worksite. This applies even if the test is part of any pre-surgery requirement or other medical procedure. Review the COVID-19 Leave Guide for instructions on requesting time off for COVID-19 testing.

**NOTE:** If your department requires that you test as part of your job (i.e. to visit clients in a hospital), you may continue to work pending COVID-19 test results.

**19. I tested positive for COVID-19? What do I do?**

You must notify your department promptly when testing positive for COVID-19, even when using a home test; (PCR confirmation testing must follow). Your department will notify the County's COVID Response Team. Please review the section below for additional details on the County's next steps, including the notice you will receive from Human Resources with important information on your rights and responsibilities

Review the COVID-19 Leave Guide for instructions on requesting time off after testing positive. For guidance on returning to work, review the Return to Work section found in this document.



**20. Is telecommuting still available in lieu of COVID-19 quarantine or isolation leaves?**

If your department has returned to entirely in-person work, telecommuting is no longer an alternative if you have been placed on quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19 concerns. Please review the COVID-19 Leave Guide for additional information.

**RESPONDING TO COVID-19 DIAGNOSIS**

**21. What is the County's process for responding to an employee testing positive for COVID-19?**

When the County receives a notification that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, Public Health will reach out to the employee and complete a “contact” form. The “contact” form will have specific questions to determine if any co-workers were potentially exposed (as defined below) to COVID-19. Information gathered includes the day and time the employee was last at a County building, the date of the positive test and the first date the employee had symptoms (if applicable).

The employee that tested positive for COVID-19 will receive a notice from Human Resources with information on their rights and responsibilities. This will include guidance on any workers compensation benefits that may apply if the COVID-19 diagnosis is determined to be work related.

Please note, the County’s COVID-19 response protocol abides to CDPH- COVID-19 guidance in accordance to Cal-Osha regulations.

**22. How will I know if I have been potentially exposed at work?**

Upon completing the contact form, Public Health will determine the potential exposures. Within one (1) business day, Human Resources, via your department, will send an exposure notice. The notice will include any benefits that may be available under federal, state and local laws and/or self-quarantine guidance if applicable. As per updated Public Health orders, not all exposures are required to self-quarantine.

If you do not receive a notice from Human Resources, you should continue to report to work as usual.

**23. What instructions will I receive if I have been determined to be “potentially exposed” at work by Public Health?**

If it was determined that you were potential exposed at work by Public Health, you will receive a notice from Human Resources. The notice will give instructions on testing options (during working



hours), self-monitoring guidance, and any applicable return to work guidance, which is in accordance with the updated quarantine Health Officer Order and current Cal-OSHA regulations.

**24. What if I am not considered a potential exposure and not experiencing symptoms, but still want to get tested for COVID-19?**

The County cannot prevent you from seeking a COVID-19 test. However, the County requires employees seeking a diagnosis remain off the worksite and use their own time (accruals) to cover their absence. Yet, if you are experiencing symptoms, please refer to the COVID-19 Leave Guide for additional information.

**25. What is the County's cleaning protocol?**

The **County of Imperial** undertakes the following cleaning measures:

- Identify and regularly clean frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, equipment, tools, handrails, handles, controls, phone, headsets, bathroom surfaces;
- Clean areas, material, and equipment used by a COVID-19 case during the high-risk exposure period, if the area, material, or equipment is indoors and will be used by another employee within 24 hours of the COVID-19 case.

The County has staff assigned to conduct cleaning; such cleaning occurs throughout the day on regular scheduled workdays. Furthermore, the County of Imperial requires that cleaning must be done in a manner that does not create a hazard to employees or subcontracted employees who do the cleaning.

**26. Are County employees provided with hand sanitizers?**

Hand sanitizers have been placed throughout the County buildings and within individual departments. If your department does not have these resources available, please report this to your supervisor.

**27. I received a notice regarding an outbreak at my department/division? What does this mean?**

COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS) CCR Title 8, Division 1, Chapter 4 3205.1 require that the County track COVID-19 positive cases by department/division. An outbreak is defined as three (3) or more COVID-19 positive cases within 14 days. COVID-19 positive cases where the employee has been telecommuting and not present at your department/division do not count towards an outbreak.



Upon identifying an outbreak, the County will notify your department and will make COVID-19 testing available for employees that were physically at that department/division during the last 14 days. A second test will be conducted a week after.

COVID-19 testing will be available at no cost to the employees within the exposed group, during employees' paid time, except for the following:

- Employees who were not present at the workplace during the relevant 14-day period(s).
- For COVID-19 cases who did not develop COVID-19 symptoms after returning to work, no testing is required for 90 days after the initial onset of COVID-19 symptoms or, for COVID-19 cases who never developed symptoms, 90 days after the first positive test.

The County will be making the determination of who does not require a test.

### **RETURN TO WORK GUIDANCE**

#### **28. I was sent home due to COVID-19 symptoms. When can I return to work? Will I be asked for a doctor's note?**

If you have not been diagnosed with COVID-19, you may return to work once you are asymptomatic without the need for a doctor's note. If you wish to return to work while you are still symptomatic, you must seek medical certification from your treating physician noting that the symptoms are **non-communicable**.

As an example, if you have a cough, you may return to work without a doctor's note when you are no longer coughing. However, if you wish to come back and still have a cough, you may do so but after being cleared by a treating physician that your symptoms are non-communicable.

If you are seeking COVID-19 testing or you have tested positive for COVID-19, please refer to questions below for return to work guidance.

#### **29. My COVID-19 test came back negative. When can I return to work?**

If you are not under self-quarantine or experiencing any symptoms, you may return to work upon submitting confirmation that you tested negative. If you are under quarantine, please refer to the question below.

#### **30. I have been in close contact with an individual outside and/or inside my residence, who tested positive for COVID-19. When can I return to the worksite?**

Please note, the County's COVID-19 response protocol abides to CDPH- COVID-19 guidance in accordance to Cal-OSHA regulations.



Due to CDPH guidance being subject to change, please refer for the most-up-to-date quarantine directives, which addresses applicable quarantine directives for unvaccinated staff to follow when working at high risk settings, mandatory testing and return to work guidance:

[www.icphd.org/health-information-and-resources/healthy-facts/covid-19/state-&-county-orders/](http://www.icphd.org/health-information-and-resources/healthy-facts/covid-19/state-&-county-orders/)

You are required to submit your negative test results to your department in order to end your quarantine/return to work.

**31. I tested positive for COVID-19. When can I return to work?**

Public Health will issue an Isolation and Quarantine Order to the employee, based on the testing or first day of showing symptoms. The notice will specify the employees return to work dates and will be emailed your personal email address.

In addition, the employee will receive a notice from Human Resources with return to work directives. In order to return to work, an employee will need to submit a doctors release, signed Return to Work acknowledgement, and a negative test result (if applicable) to their immediate supervisor.

You may submit a release from a provider in Mexico. However, the County will also require that you obtain a release from a U.S. provider.

**32. Will the County accept home test kits when reporting a COVID-19 positive test or to end quarantine or isolation?**

**COVID-19 Positive Diagnosis**- No, the County will not accept results of a home test as final confirmation of your COVID-19 positive diagnosis. Yet, you are directed to immediately report your positive results to your supervisor during the meanwhile you seek PCR confirmation testing, as required by Public Health.

**End Quarantine or Isolation**- No, home test kits are not acceptable to end quarantine or isolation periods; antigen/rapid tests must be administered at testing facilities.