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JEFFERSON COUNTY UNIFIED COMMAND CENTER UPDATE FOR JULY 7, 2020

Birmingham, AL – The Jefferson County Unified Command Center (JCUC) and its partner agencies continue to help provide information, goods and services to the people of Jefferson County throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response. Dr. Mark Wilson, Jefferson County Health Officer, and Jim Coker, Director of Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency serve as the co- leaders of the Unified Command Center.

COVID-19 is Moving in the Wrong Direction in Jefferson County

- Jefferson County has had an average of over 190 new cases of COVID-19 per day during the week that ended Monday, July 6, which is dramatically higher than previous weeks.
- The average percent of tests identifying new cases has been 13% over the same week, also the highest so far.
- As of noon on July 6, there were 245 confirmed hospitalized positive COVID-19 patients, up from an average of 107 hospitalized per day with COVID-19 during May 27 through June 15.
- On July 6, there were 101 COVID-19 patients in intensive care and 48 on ventilators in Jefferson County.
- On July 6, there were an additional 141 patients under investigation for COVID-19 infection who were in the hospital; this was an increase from an average of 41 hospitalized patients per day under investigation during May 27 through June 15.

To get this under control, we need to make sure everyone in the community follows strict social distancing, frequent and careful hand washing or use of hand sanitizer, and the wearing of face coverings while in public.

Jefferson County is still under the statewide *Safer at Home* public health order, in addition to the countywide face covering order. Links to these orders can be found below or on the JCDH.org website. We are depending on the support of all local governmental leaders to encourage their constituents to follow safe practices and to help enforce these orders when necessary, to help ensure that our hospitals don't get overwhelmed and our businesses can stay open.

Face Covering Order: https://www.jcdh.org/SitePages/Misc/PdfViewer?AdminUploadId=804

Statewide Safer at Home Order: https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/legal/assets/order-adph-cov-gatherings-063020.pdf

Frequently Asked Questions from Businesses

If an employee has symptoms concerning for COVID-19, what type of tests should they pursue to diagnose COVID-19?

- To diagnose COVID-19, a PCR-based (polymerase chain reaction) nasal swab test should be utilized.
- COVID-19 antibody tests should **not** be used for the purposes of diagnosing COVID-19. This is a blood test.

What should be done if an employee tests positive for COVID-19?

- In the event that an employee tests positive for COVID-19, a designated company representative should begin to obtain the following information:
    - When did the employee start having symptoms concerning for COVID-19? (Cough, fever, shortness of breath, muscle aches, change in sense of smell, change in sense of taste, headache, etc.)
        - Symptoms of Coronavirus
    - When was the employee last present at work?
    - Does the employee have symptoms or do they have no symptoms?
        - If the employee was having symptoms, the company representative will need to start determining contacts in the workplace beginning two days prior to symptom onset.
            - For example, if an employee had a cough and fever on 06/03/2020, then contacts in the work place would need to be determined from 06/01/2020 until their last day on the job.
        - If the employee was not having symptoms, it is more difficult to determine when they may have become contagious. Therefore, a company representative will need to determine contacts for the employee starting 10 days prior to the day they were tested and going until their last day on the job.

- o What defines a close contact?
    - ▪ A close contact is defined as a person who has been within 6 feet for 15 minutes or greater of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- o It is critically important that an employee's privacy is maintained. Their name should NOT be disclosed to other employees as this is protected health information as regulated under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).
- o If you have not yet been contacted by the Jefferson County Department of Health, you can call 205-930-1440 to seek out specific guidance for your organization.

If an employee knows of someone who has been a contact to another person with COVID-19, do they need to be excluded from work?

- • No, the employee would not need to be excluded from work in this situation unless they have been directly in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Who should be excluded from work?

- • Anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 should be excluded from the workplace as defined by the quarantine order issued from Jefferson County Department of Health or as defined by the Alabama Department of Public Health if the employee does not reside in Jefferson County.
    - o Persons who have no symptoms should also be excluded from the workplace. Even in the absence of symptoms, COVID-19 can be passed from person to person.

What if an employee lives in the same household as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?

- • In the event that a member of an employee's household tests positive for COVID-19, the employee should be excluded from the workplace for 14 days. If a person has tested positive for COVID-19 and they live in the same household as the employee, there is a very high chance that COVID-19 could have been transmitted to that employee.
- • Before returning to work, an employee who has a household contact who has tested positive for COVID-19 should be assessed for symptoms.
    - o They should have no fever for at least three days without fever reducing agents, and they should be assessed for symptoms such as cough, fever, muscle aches, or changes in smell/taste.

When is the best time for an employee to be tested after an exposure?

- • Because of the biology of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, a person will not immediately test positive after exposure. It may take between 4 to 6 days after exposure before a person will test positive for COVID-19.
    - o We do not recommend immediately testing after exposure. However, isolation is needed for a person who has had a significant exposure.

- o If an employee is tested immediately after exposure, the negative test does not indicate that they do not have COVID-19. Therefore, it is still important that they be isolated.

If an employee has had a significant exposure AND they had a test 4-6 days after that exposure, will they be able to come back to work if they had a negative test result for COVID-19?

- No. Even with a negative test result a person who has had a significant exposure to COVID-19 will need to be excluded from work for 14 days.
  - o Once exposed to COVID-19, it can take up to 14 days before a person begins to show symptoms. Therefore, those who are exposed to COVID-19 should isolate at home for 14 days.
  - o If they develop symptoms during this time, they will need to pursue testing. If testing is positive, the employee will be required to quarantine to prevent further spread of the virus.

What if an employee has tested positive for COVID-19 and they have been without fever for three days? Will they be able to come back to work immediately?

- No. It is critically important that at least 14 days have passed since symptom onset AND they have been without fevers for three days without the use of fever reducing medications. ADDITIONALLY, they need to have an overall improvement in their symptoms prior to returning to work.
- For individuals who are asymptomatic, they will need to be excluded from work for 14 days from the date of their diagnostic test.
- Returning to work before these conditions are met will significantly increase the risk of spread of COVID-19, and this may further impact business operations.

Is there a way to obtain additional paid sick leave for my employees?

- Yes, this is through H.R. 6198 – Emergency Paid Leave Act of 2020.
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- For each 30 day period, the Social Security Administration must pay two thirds of an eligible employee's average monthly pay to a maximum of $4000. Emergency Paid Leave benefits are available for up to 90 days from the period during which an employee first files an application for such leave. Available benefits for emergency paid leave are reduced proportionally by any amount of paid leave an employee receives from the state or employer during each 30 day period.
- This funding is available until December 31, 2020.

My employee has provided a quarantine letter stating that their quarantine ends on a particular date. Is there any additional documentation that is needed?

- No. Once the terms of an employee's quarantine letter have been fulfilled, they are released from quarantine. No additional documentation will be provided by the Jefferson County Department of Health.

One of my employees recently tested positive for COVID-19, what should I do to clean their area and workspace?

- For more detailed information, please refer to the following website: [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), May 2020](#).
- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- Comprehensive guidance for cleaning and disinfection procedures can be found at: [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#).
  - If seven days or more have passed since the last exposure to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, an area will only need standard cleaning.
- A comprehensive list of approved disinfectants against COVID-19 can be found at: [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)](#)

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