



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
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Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality  
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**Memorandum**

**TO:** Health Care Facility Chief Executive Officers, Administrators, Emergency Medical Services and Occupational Health Leadership

**FROM:** Elizabeth Daake Kelley, MPH, MBA, Director  
Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality

**SUBJECT:** Health Care Personnel with Potential Exposure to Patients with COVID-19 Guidance

**DATE:** March 19, 2020

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to work with state, federal and local partners on the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, and we continue to appreciate the essential role you have in responding to this evolving situation.

DPH understands the important role that health care personnel (HCP) serve in caring for Massachusetts residents. Massachusetts now has widespread community transmission of COVID-19. In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)*, facilities and providers may consider allowing asymptomatic HCP who have had an exposure to COVID-19 to continue working after the following conditions have been met:

- All options to improve staffing detailed in your facility or organization's emergency management plan have been exhausted;
- The occupational health services program has been consulted;
- The health care facility has stopped all non-essential, elective invasive procedures, if applicable; and
- The health care facility has postponed any non-essential outpatient appointments, if applicable.

If these conditions are met and HCP are allowed to continue working, the health care facility or provider is required to:

- Ensure HCP report temperature and absence of symptoms prior to starting work each day;
- Ensure HCP don a facemask for the entire time that they are at work for the 14 days after the exposure event;
- Direct that if HCP develop even mild symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they must cease patient care activities and notify their supervisor or occupational health services prior to leaving work;
- Prohibit HCP with even mild symptoms consistent with COVID-19 from working while they are symptomatic and, in accordance with DPH guidelines, test for COVID-19
  - HCP must remain out of work while awaiting COVID-19 test results;
- Using clinical judgment avoid having HCP care for high risk patient, including immunocompromised patients, for the 14 days after the exposure event; and
- Consider having HCP work shorter shifts (i.e. 8 hours) as there is early evidence that shorter shifts may be protective.

Health care facilities and providers may not request masks from the Strategic National Stockpile for the purposes of allowing exposed HCP to return to work.

CDC HCP Personnel Exposure document may be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>

DPH strongly encourages all health care facilities and providers in Massachusetts to monitor the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for up-to-date information and resources:

- CMS website: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Current-Emergencies/Current-Emergencies-page>
- CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>

Additionally, please visit DPH's website that provides up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>.