

May 7, 2020

Dear Texas Employer,

We know that employers are concerned about the health of their employees, customers, and the community. Recently, we at the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) have received reports that some employers are requiring their employees to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test before they can return to work after an illness. We appreciate your dedication to the health of your employees and our community and can understand the concern.

However, we at DSHS are not recommending COVID-19 testing be required before returning to work. This is in alignment with guidance from the Texas Workforce Commission and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (references provided below).

DSHS recommends that mildly ill individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19, like fever or cough, stay at home and take care of themselves there. Many mildly ill people will not need to go to their healthcare provider for testing or treatment. Sick individuals can help prevent the spread of their illness by staying home.

For these individuals, DSHS recommends that they stay home until they are fever-free for at least 72 hours (measured when they are not taking fever-reducing medicine like Advil™, Tylenol™, or aspirin), their symptoms have improved, and at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared. After they have met these criteria, they can return to work. These criteria were created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to take the place of testing to determine when COVID-19 patients can discontinue home isolation and return to work. A test-based strategy may be used to determine if someone with confirmed COVID-19 can be released from isolation, when recommended by their healthcare provider. If a diagnosis other than COVID-19 is made, criteria for return to work should be based on that diagnosis.

DSHS is encouraging employers to consider ways to support the health of their employees, including implementing flexible sick leave, social distancing, routine environmental cleaning and disinfection, videoconferencing, telework, and other supportive policies. We thank you for partnering with us for a healthy Texas.

Sincerely,

Texas Department of State Health Services

**References:**

- Texas Workforce Commission
  - <https://twc.texas.gov/news/covid-19-resources-employers>
  - <https://twc.texas.gov/files/agency/faq-texas-employers-twc.docx>
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration
  - <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
- Texas Department of State Health Services
  - <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>