

TIPS FOR TALKING WITH STAFF WHEN COVID-19 COMES TO WORK



Whatcom County
HEALTH
Department



It can be an incredibly challenging time in any workplace when an employee tests positive for COVID-19. It is critical to maintain open and clear communication with everyone in the organization, and equally important to protect people's confidentiality. Below are suggestions for how to approach these tricky conversations.

- **Be sensitive to the feelings of employees** who have been diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. Even if the person's symptoms are mild, they are likely to be anxious about what might happen, or whether they have spread the virus to family or coworkers. Clearly communicate that they can count on your support.
- **Reassure employees about their confidentiality.**
- **After determining which other employees are "close contacts," consider calling these employees** rather than waiting for them to read an email or text.
- **Refer employees to the Health Department.** Your employees will likely have questions. Have them call the Health Department nurse consult line immediately: (360) 778-6128.
- **Follow up with an email** clearly laying out the steps your organization will take and what you would like employees to do. See [Sample Messaging for Businesses to Communicate to Employees about COVID-19 Diagnosis in the Workplace](#).
- **Consider forwarding resource documents** so employees have the information they need, such as:
 - [What is Contact Tracing?](#)
 - [Contact Tracing: What will they ask me?](#)
 - [What to do if you have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?](#)
 - [What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19?](#)
 - [When can I return to work after COVID-19 exposure?](#)
- **Check in with any affected employees** while they are in quarantine or isolation.
- **Communicate frequently with all employees during the process.** To minimize rumors and anxiety, it's important to keep in touch with everyone.
- **Contact us** if employees have questions or concerns and you need more information:
 - Email: health-BRT@co.whatcom.wa.us
 - Call during business hours: (360) 778-6100; Call after hours: (360) 715-2588