ATTENDING WORK WITH COVID-19 SYMPTOMS, POSITIVE TEST, OR CLOSE CONTACT

OBJECTIVES

- To outline the expectations for workers to NOT attend work at an AHS setting when the worker exhibits COVID-19 core symptoms, is a confirmed case of COVID-19, or has been a close contact of a COVID-19 case (with exceptions).

PRINCIPLES

This Directive applies to worker attendance in an AHS setting when the worker exhibits COVID-19 core symptoms, is a confirmed case of COVID-19, or has been a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. This Directive applies to all AHS settings.

Nothing in this Directive prevents a Medical Officer of Health (MOH) or AHS leadership from establishing or implementing an exemption process for work restrictions, or from setting additional work restrictions (e.g., reassignment of unimmunized workers), for example, in the event of a COVID-19 exposure or outbreak (see the AHS Communicable Disease Assessment Policy and Workplace Accommodation Policy).

APPLICABILITY

Compliance with this document is required by all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers).
ELEMENTS

1. COVID-19 Testing for Workers

1.1 A worker is a confirmed case of COVID-19 if they have tested positive for COVID-19 using a Health Canada-approved molecular test (such as polymerase chain reaction test [PCR] or ID NOW test).

1.2 A worker exhibiting COVID-19 core symptoms who:
   a) tests positive for COVID-19 using a Health Canada-approved rapid antigen test is considered a confirmed case of COVID-19; or
   b) tests negative for COVID-19 using a Health Canada-approved rapid antigen test should be re-tested using a molecular test.
      (i) If the molecular test is negative, the worker is not considered a confirmed case of COVID-19, but is subject to the requirements of Section 2.2 a) below.
      (ii) If the molecular test is positive the worker is considered a confirmed case of COVID-19.
      (iii) If a molecular test is not completed, the worker is considered a confirmed case of COVID-19.

1.3 An asymptomatic worker who:
   a) tests positive for COVID-19 using a Health Canada-approved rapid antigen test should be re-tested using a molecular test. Until the molecular test results return, the worker must not attend work or any other function at an AHS setting (except for the purposes of receiving health services).
      (i) If the molecular test is negative, the worker is not considered a confirmed case of COVID-19, but remains subject to any testing requirements outlined in Section 3 below.
      (ii) If the molecular test is positive, the worker is considered a confirmed case of COVID-19.
      (iii) If a molecular test is not completed, the worker is considered a confirmed case of COVID-19.
   b) tests negative for COVID-19 using a Health Canada-approved rapid antigen test is not considered a confirmed case of COVID-19.
2. Work Restrictions for Workers Exhibiting COVID-19 Core Symptoms or Who Are a Confirmed Case of COVID-19

2.1 A worker cannot attend work or any function at an AHS setting (other than to receive health services) if the worker is:

a) exhibiting COVID-19 core symptoms; or

b) a confirmed case of COVID-19.

2.2 A worker exhibiting COVID-19 core symptoms, regardless if they are a confirmed case of COVID-19, must not attend work or any other function at an AHS setting (except for the purposes of receiving health services) for a minimum period of five (5) days (if the worker is fully immunized) or 10 days (if the worker is not fully immunized) from the first day on which the worker exhibits COVID-19 core symptoms, or until the worker’s COVID-19 core symptoms improve and the worker is fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications), whichever period is longer.

a) If a Health Canada-approved molecular test confirms the worker is negative for COVID-19 and the COVID-19 core symptoms resolve, a worker may attend work or another function at an AHS setting before the five (5) or 10 day isolation period has concluded. If the worker was a close contact and tested negative for COVID-19, any additional work restrictions set out in Section 3 of this Directive would continue to apply.

2.3 An asymptomatic worker who is a confirmed case of COVID-19 cannot attend work or any other function at an AHS setting (except for the purposes of receiving health services) for a period of five (5) days (if the worker is fully immunized) or 10 days (if the worker is not fully immunized) from when they first take a Health Canada-approved test which confirms the worker is positive for COVID-19.

a) If an asymptomatic worker who is a confirmed case of COVID-19 develops COVID-19 core symptoms during the period of work restrictions, that worker must not attend work or any other function at an AHS setting (except for the purposes of receiving health services) for five (5) days (if the worker is fully immunized) or 10 days (if the worker is not fully immunized) from the first day that the worker exhibits COVID-19 core symptoms, or until the worker’s COVID-19 core symptoms improve and the worker is fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications), whichever is longer.

3. Work Restrictions for Close Contacts

3.1 Key Principles for All Workers Who Are Close Contacts
a) Workers who develop COVID-19 core symptoms at any time, or test positive for COVID-19, must comply with the requirements of Section 2 above.

b) A worker will be asked to disclose their immunization status to AHS at the time they provide notification they have been a close contact.

c) A worker who is medically unable to be immunized may be accommodated in accordance with the AHS Workplace Accommodation Policy.

3.2 Workers Who Are Fully Immunized Close Contacts and Have Received a Booster Dose

a) Workers who have been close contacts and are fully immunized and have received a booster dose may attend work or another function at an AHS setting.

(i) A worker who works in a long term care, designated supportive living, or hospice setting, is a close contact, and has received a booster dose must comply with the testing requirements outlined in Section 3.3 below.

3.3 Workers Who Are Fully Immunized Close Contacts, but Have Not Received a Booster Dose

a) Workers who have been close contacts and are fully immunized but have not received a booster dose may attend work or another function at an AHS setting. The worker must undergo a Health Canada-approved COVID-19 rapid antigen test within 24 hours of starting each shift, for 10 days beginning on the day on which the worker was last exposed to the confirmed case of COVID-19.

b) See Section 1.3 above for direction on asymptomatic testing.

c) If the worker does not get tested in accordance with this Section, they must not attend work or any other function at an AHS setting (except for the purposes of receiving health services) until they comply with this testing requirement or complete their 10-day work restriction.

d) The Health Canada-approved COVID-19 rapid antigen tests are supplied by the employer, but worker-supplied Health Canada-approved COVID-19 rapid antigen tests are also accepted.

e) Workers who were a confirmed case of COVID-19 are not required to undergo rapid antigen testing and may continue to attend work or another function at an AHS setting after becoming a close contact if:
(i) the worker retains proof they were a positive case of COVID-19 and is prepared to provide proof to their manager, upon request;

(ii) the worker became a close contact 21 days or less from the date they first exhibited core COVID-19 symptoms, or the date they became a confirmed case of COVID-19 if asymptomatic;

(iii) the worker has completed the applicable work restrictions as required under Section 2 of this Directive; and

(iv) the worker is asymptomatic.

3.4 Workers Who Are Not Fully Immunized Close Contacts

a) Workers who have been close contacts and are not fully immunized, including those who have recovered from a previous COVID-19 infection, must not attend work or any other function at an AHS setting for a minimum of 10 days (except for the purposes of receiving health services) beginning on the day on which the worker was last exposed to the confirmed case of COVID-19.

b) Workers who were a confirmed case of COVID-19 may continue to attend work or another function at an AHS setting after becoming a close contact if:

(i) the worker retains proof they were a positive case of COVID-19 and is prepared to provide proof to their manager, upon request;

(ii) the worker became a close contact 21 days or less from the date they first exhibited core COVID-19 symptoms, or the date they became a confirmed case of COVID-19 if asymptomatic;

(iii) the worker has completed the applicable work restrictions as required under Section 2 of this Directive; and

(iv) the worker is asymptomatic.

4. Non-Compliance

4.1 Failure to comply with this Directive may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or appointment.

DEFINITIONS

AHS setting means any environment where treatment/procedures and other health services are delivered by, on behalf of, or in conjunction with, Alberta Health Services. This includes but is not necessarily restricted to all land, facilities, affiliated sites, mobile equipment and vehicles owned, leased, or rented, and AHS corporate offices for the purpose of conducting AHS business. It does not include working remotely from home.
Asymptomatic means a person who is not exhibiting COVID-19 core symptoms.

Booster dose means, for the purposes of this document:

a) any additional dose(s) of COVID-19 vaccine administered at least five (5) months (or at least eight [8] weeks if the person is immunocompromised) after meeting the fully immunized definition; and

b) fourteen days having elapsed since the date on which the person received their booster dose.

Close contact means a worker who:

a) provided direct care for the case (including healthcare workers, family members or other caregivers), or who had other similar close physical contact (e.g. intimate partner, hug, kiss, handshake) without consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment;

b) lived with or otherwise had close prolonged contact which may be cumulative (e.g. multiple interactions for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period and within two meters with a confirmed case without consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment and the case is not completely isolating away from others in the home); or

c) had direct contact with infectious bodily fluids of a confirmed case (e.g. shared cigarettes, glasses/bottles, eating utensils) or was coughed or sneezed on while not wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

COVID-19 core symptoms means the following symptoms of COVID-19 that are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition:

a) cough;

b) fever;

c) sore throat;

d) shortness of breath;

e) runny nose; or

f) loss of taste or smell.

Fully immunized means a worker:

a) who has received two doses of vaccine in a two dose COVID-19 vaccine series or one dose in a one dose COVID-19 vaccine series; and

b) for whom fourteen days have elapsed since the date on which the person received the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine of a two dose series or one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in a one dose vaccine series.

Worker means AHS employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, volunteers, and contracted service providers (including anyone providing services for AHS on behalf of a contracted service provider).
REFERENCES

- Alberta Health Services Governance Documents:
  - Communicable Disease Assessment Policy
  - Managing Students Involved in Placements During a Communicable Disease Outbreak, Epidemic or Pandemic Guideline
  - Workplace Accommodation Policy

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