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MEMORANDUM

TO: City of Lowell Employees
FROM: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager
DATE: May 6, 2021
SUBJECT: Updated COVID-19 Employee Protocols and Guidelines

This memorandum is intended to provide an update on the COVID-19-specific workplace protocols and guidelines currently in effect for City of Lowell employees. The City of Lowell's COVID-19 Executive Policy Group is closely monitoring guidelines released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) related to limiting the spread of COVID-19 to determine appropriate revisions to previously implemented employee protocols.

This memorandum contains revised quarantine and personal travel guidelines for employees who are fully vaccinated that are consistent with new CDC and DPH guidance issued in recent months.

Several portions of this memo describe varying protocols for fully vaccinated and unvaccinated employees. Employees shall be considered fully vaccinated: two weeks after receiving their second dose of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after receiving a single-dose vaccine (e.g. Johnson & Johnson's Jassen vaccine). Employees who have received only one dose in a two-dose series, or who have received a shot within two weeks, shall be considered partially vaccinated, and must adhere to the same quarantine policy in place for unvaccinated employees.

While receiving a COVID-19 vaccine significantly reduces an individual's risk of contracting COVID-19, it does not make them fully immune. Further, public health research regarding the ability of individuals who have been vaccinated to continue to transmit the virus remains inconclusive at this time. As such, certain policies, including mask requirements, remain in effect for all employees. At this time, these measures remain critical to protecting the safety of employees, particularly those who have not yet been vaccinated, but are subject to change based on subsequent changes to state and federal guidance.

In all instances, if an employee tests positive for COVID-19 or is exposed to a positive case, the Health Department must be notified to determine the appropriate course of action.

QUARANTINE REQUIREMENT OF CLOSE CONTACTS

Unvaccinated/Partially Vaccinated Employees:

An employee who is not fully vaccinated and is determined to have been a contact to a positive case will be required to quarantine and remain out of the workplace for at least 7 days. The duration of their quarantine period may range from 7 to 14 days based on several factors. An employee in quarantine should remain in contact with the Health Department to determine when it is appropriate for them to be released.

Employees will need to remain quarantined consistent with one of the quarantine options below:

- 14 days of quarantine, release on Day 15, if: The individual has experienced ANY symptoms during the quarantine period EVEN if they have a negative COVID-19 test or have been fully vaccinated.
- 10 days of quarantine, release on Day 11, if: The individual has not experienced any symptoms up to that point. Active monitoring should continue through day 14.
- 7 days of quarantine, release on Day 8, if: The individual has not experience any symptoms and a negative COVID-19 test is produced on or after day 5 of quarantine. Active monitoring should continue through day 14.

This policy applies in situations where an employee is exposed at the workplace or outside of the workplace.

Fully Vaccinated Employees:

Fully vaccinated employees are not required to quarantine or test, following an exposure, unless they are exhibiting symptoms. However, they should remain alert to symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following the exposure and must contact the Health Department if symptoms appear within this period.

Employees Who Have Had COVID-19 in the last 90 days:

Employees who have had COVID-19 in the last 90 days and have recovered and returned to work are not required to quarantine or test, following an exposure, unless they are exhibiting symptoms. However, they ~~but~~ should remain alert to symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following the exposure and must contact the Health Department if symptoms appear within this period.

PERSONAL TRAVEL

Unvaccinated/Partially Vaccinated Employees:

Employees are required to notify their Department Head in writing if they travel to anywhere outside of Massachusetts. In accordance with the March 22, 2021 Massachusetts Travel Advisory, employees are advised to quarantine for 10 days upon arrival or produce a negative test taken no more than 72 hours prior to arrival. A test may be obtained after arrival but the employee must quarantine until receiving a negative test result.

Fully Vaccinated Employees:

Fully vaccinated employees do not need to produce a negative test or quarantine upon returning from out-of state travel. Employees in this category should still notify their department head if they intend to travel and must quarantine if they experience symptoms during or upon return from travel.

PROTOCOL FOR POSITIVE EMPLOYEE TESTS

Any employee who received a positive COVID-19 test result must immediately notify his/her Department Head and should begin self-isolation.

The employee's Department Head will contact the Health Department, which will then evaluate the circumstances and determine close contacts of the employee as well as the isolation/quarantine requirements of those contacts. Anyone determined to be a contact to the case will be asked to take a COVID-19 PCR test, or produce evidence of being fully vaccinated or having recovered from COVID 19 in the last 90 days. This will enable the Health Department to further assess the extent of the spread within the workplace and respond as necessary. The City has entered into an agreement with Trinity EMS to provide COVID-19 PCR testing for employees that have been determined to be a contact to a positive case. The Health Department will be able to set up a testing time and review the results which will help to relieve the problem of having to find a testing site.

Any employee that is not contacted directly following an incident where an employee tests positive should assume that it has been determined that they were not among the close contacts of the employee, and will not be required to quarantine. The Health Department considers a host of factors, including time of exposure, social distancing, and use of face coverings, in determining contacts.

In order to prevent confusion and to allow for the Health Department to communicate with impacted employees effectively, an employee who has tested positive should not conduct their own outreach to coworkers who they have been in contact with prior to their positive test.

ISOLATION FOLLOWING POSITIVE TEST

Employees that test positive are required to isolate at their homes and remain out of the workplace on leave for at least 10 days after symptoms initially appear. Employees may not return to work until the criteria for ending home isolation is met, meaning:

- At least 24 hours have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms; and,
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; or
- If asymptomatic, 10 days from date of positive test.

An employee may not return to the workplace prior to these conditions being met based on a recommendation from their personal physician.

MASKS/FACE COVERINGS

On May 6, 2020, I issued a memorandum concerning the use of face coverings by city employees. This memorandum was issued as an order to comply with state-level orders and guidance concerning the spread of COVID-19. It remains a mandatory policy that employees wear face coverings in common public areas, in

offices other than their own, when entering and exiting City buildings, when interacting with members of the public and in their own office setting when they are not able to remain 6 feet apart from others.

Masks are allowed to be removed ONLY if outdoors and a minimum of 6 feet distance can be maintained from others.

DO NOT REPORT TO WORK IF SICK

Regardless of the nature of the illness, any employee who feels sick must not report to work. If any employee begins to feel sick at work, they must leave the work place immediately.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, loss of taste or smell and headache. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you should remain home, monitor them, and ultimately seek testing if they continue. Employees are also encouraged to take their temperature before reporting to work. No employee may report to work if their measured temperature is 100.3 degrees or greater.

An employee that notices a co-worker demonstrating signs of or complaining about symptoms should be directed to their supervisor and instructed to depart the workplace.

ADDITIONAL WORKPLACE GUIDANCE TO PREVENT EXPOSURE & LIMIT THE TRANSMISSION OF THE VIRUS

- Avoid face to face meetings – critical situations requiring in-person discussion must follow social distancing. Conduct all meetings via conference calls, if possible. Do not convene meetings of more than 10 people.
- Do not shake hands
- Wash hands frequently with soap for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching high-contact surfaces or before eating.
- Maintain a physical distance of six feet and do not congregate in large groups during lunch/breaks.
- Cover coughing or sneezing with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash hands, if no tissue is available then cough into your elbow.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands throughout the day.
- **It is highly recommended that all employees receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible.**

Appointments are available at the City run site at the Lowell Senior Center, and can be reserved at: lowellma.gov/lowellvax.