

November 21, 2022

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Protocol – Central Office

Operational Guidelines for COVID-19 Response will be updated frequently to incorporate the latest scientific, medical, and governmental recommendations. Please ensure you are using the most current document.

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Memo from Commissioner

To: All DOC Staff

From: Nicholas J. Deml, Commissioner

Re: COVID-19 Guidelines

Date: September 30, 2022

More than two and a half years into our pandemic response, much has changed. We continue to modify our approach based on current health recommendations, our operational needs, and a recognition of the impact mitigation measures have on our staff and the individuals in our care and custody. At this stage, our focus is on normalizing operations as much as possible, while still protecting health and safety.

It remains necessary to use COVID-19 Guidelines to provide staff with clear, up-to-date direction regarding this response. It remains infeasible to update post orders or directives rapidly enough to support the nimble response required of us.

These guidelines are intended to give you clear and focused procedures which incorporate recognized best practices for your daily interactions with incarcerated individuals, coworkers, and other persons at the workplace. **These guidelines should be implemented immediately, regardless of any inconsistency with prior practices, post orders, or procedures.** We will continue to update the guidelines as we move toward endemic operations. We will do our absolute best to keep you informed, supported, and supplied with what you need.

Thank you for your continued assistance in this unprecedented event. You have demonstrated the unbridled effectiveness of our Department, the professionalism and compassion of our team, and the steadfastness that ensured our success over the last two and half years.

Definitions

- a. **PPE- Personal Protective Equipment:** equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. (Gloves, masks, eye protection, gowns)
- b. **N95 Mask:** An **N95 mask** (also called a respirator) is a **mask** that is worn over the face to prevent the inhalation of airborne particles. The **N95** designation means that the **mask** will filter at least 95% of particles 0.3 microns in size.
- c. **Surgical Mask:** A disposable mask covering the user's nose and mouth and providing a physical barrier to fluids and particulate materials.
- d. **Antigen test:** A rapid COVID-19 antigen detects the presence of SARS-CoV-2 virus proteins in the sample, allowing early detection of the infection within 15-30 minutes. The test should be performed after the onset of symptoms.
- e. **Lamp test:** LAMP is similar to the PCR lab tests, also known as Lucira. It amplifies the SARS-CoV-2 virus's genetic material while the test is running. Lucira's accuracy is comparable to one of the highest sensitivity lab PCR tests.

Section 1 – COVID Response Team

1. DOC will continue to operate a COVID Response Team (CRT). This team is established by the Chief of Operations and overseen by the Facilities Director.
2. The team:
 - i. Receives direct communication from DOC sites regarding new cases and initiates rapid and coordinated response.
 - ii. Reviews Phase movement.
 - iii. Reviews and oversees protocol compliance at all sites.
 - iv. Maintains communication with designated VDH epidemiologists for situational awareness and current medical information.
 - v. May meet with the Superintendent from an affected facility to review cases, coordinate approved response, outline mitigation strategies and discuss **Phase changes** based on current data.

Section 2: General Precautions

A. Entrance into Central Office

1. All staff and visitors are encouraged to be aware of symptoms that may indicate COVID infection.
2. Persons who develop such symptoms are encouraged to test as soon as possible.

B. Environmental Cleaning

1. Frequent cleaning is recommended, especially of high touch surfaces such as doorknobs, keys, handrails, and telephones.
2. In addition to cleaning completed by building janitorial staff, DOC staff are encouraged to clean high touch areas in their work station or in shared spaces.
3. Cleaning may be done using EPA-certified disinfecting wipes such as the “Red-capped PDI Sani Cloth Germicidal Wipes” or equivalent as available.

C. Face Masks

1. Face masks are not required at this time.

2. Any staff member or visitor may choose to wear a mask in any area.

Section 3: COVID Testing

A. COVID-19 LAMP – Staff Symptomatic

1. Central Office shall maintain LAMP and antigen test kits in a location with limited access.
2. LAMP tests are available to any DOC staff who become symptomatic when reporting to work or who report symptoms during their shift.
3. LAMP tests should not be used for anyone who has previously been identified as positive within the past 90 days. Please see alternate instructions for those circumstances at #16
4. Staff will conduct the test in an isolated area avoiding close contact with others.
5. Staff will notify their supervisor of the results.
6. Upon being notified that a staff member has tested positive for COVID, the supervisor will ask whether the staff member has been in a correctional facility during their infectious period (48 hours prior to development of symptoms or a positive test.)
7. If the staff member has been in a correctional facility during their infectious period, the supervisor will notify CRT as prescribed in [Section B](#) below.
8. For any initial positive COVID 19 result from a **test taken ONSITE**, staff will complete the [VDH Report form](#) and return to their supervisor.
9. The supervisor will then forward the VDH form to the CRT alias AHS.DOCCOVIDResponseTeam@vermont.gov.
10. For any initial positive COVID 19 results taken **OFFSITE**, staff do NOT need to submit the VDH form.
11. Negative LAMP results do not require a VDH Report Form and are NOT required to be sent to the COVID team alias.
12. No PCR test is required following a LAMP positive or negative test.

Home COVID 19 Test Results

13. Staff who are symptomatic and positive on a home test will be considered COVID + and will be excluded from work until eligible to return to work as provided for in [Section 4.](#)
14. Staff who are symptomatic and negative on a home test are deemed COVID negative and may return to work. (Staff who wish to use sick leave because they are unwell may do so using normal processes.)

Symptomatic but Prior Positive Staff

15. Staff who have been confirmed as COVID+ within the past 90 days should not be tested with a LAMP test.
16. Such staff should complete an antigen test; this will be conducted in an isolated area avoiding close contact with others.
17. If this test is positive, they will be excluded from work and follow the guidance in [Section 4.](#)
18. If the test is negative, the staff member is deemed COVID negative and may return to work. (Staff who wish to use sick leave because they are unwell may do so using normal processes.)

B. Reporting Positive Results When there has been Facility Exposure

1. Positive results for Central Office staff do **not** need to be reported to CRT unless the staff member was in a correctional facility during their infectious period (48 hours prior to development of symptoms or a positive test.)
2. If the staff member has been in a correctional facility during their infectious period, their supervisor must notify the COVID response alias and include the following information:
 - ii. Name
 - iii. DOB
 - iv. Date of Testing

- v. Location
- vi. Any potential close contacts
- vii. Last day worked
- viii. Date of any facility visits within the prior 48 hours.

Section 4 - Return to Work

The health and safety of our staff is our top priority. We understand this is a difficult time for all employees, and we are doing our best to ensure we take the steps necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and allow staff to return to work. Our goal is to get healthy employees back to work as soon as possible to support our mission.

As Central Office staff have an ability to telework, the below criteria only applies to physical return to work. COVID positive staff may work remotely prior to clearance when feeling well enough to do so and in consultation with their supervisor.

In order to be cleared to physically return to work, staff will need to follow the criteria below:

Staff can return to work after day 5 if:

- i. The person never had symptoms or symptoms have improved AND
- ii. they have had no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication AND
- iii. the person has two negative antigen tests performed at least 24 hours apart beginning no earlier than day 5 (and meets conditions i and ii above)
- iv. OR if still antigen positive on day 9, STOP testing and return on day 11 (as long as conditions I and ii above are met)

LAMP or PCR Tests may not be used as a substitute for antigen tests in the return to work process.

Staff who are immunocompromised or have symptoms that persist for longer than 10 days should seek the advice of a health care provider prior to returning to work.