



## Department of Health

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**DATE:** March 16, 2020  
**TO:** Hospitals, Nursing Homes (NHs) and Adult Care Facilities (ACFs)  
**FROM:** NYSDOH Bureau of Healthcare Associated Infections (BHA I)

### **Health Advisory: Protocols for Personnel to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure**

**Please distribute immediately to:**

Administrators, Infection Preventionists, Hospital Epidemiologists, Medical Directors, Nursing Directors, Risk Managers, and Public Affairs.

Healthcare facilities may allow healthcare personnel (HCP) exposed to or recovering from Covid-19, whether direct care providers or other facility staff, to work under the following conditions:

1. Furloughing such staff would result in staff shortages that would adversely impact the operation of the facility.
2. HCP who have been contacts to confirmed or suspected cases are asymptomatic. HCP with confirmed or suspected Covid-19 have maintained isolation for at least 7 days after illness onset and have been at least 72 hours fever-free with other symptoms improving.
3. HCP who are asymptomatic contacts of confirmed or suspected cases should self-monitor twice a day (temperature, symptoms), and undergo temperature monitoring and symptom checks at the beginning of each shift and at least every 12 hours. At the current time, staff who are recovered from Covid-19 should wear a facemask until 14 days after onset of illness if mild symptoms persist but are improving. Staff who are asymptomatic contacts should wear a facemask while working until 14 days after the last high-risk exposure.
4. At the current time, staff working under these conditions should preferentially be assigned to patients at lower risk (e.g. on units established for patients with confirmed Covid-19) as opposed to higher-risk patients (e.g. severely immunocompromised, elderly). As this pandemic grows, all staff will need to be assigned to treat all patients regardless of risk level.
5. If staff who are asymptomatic contacts working under these conditions develop symptoms consistent with Covid-19, they should immediately stop work and isolate at home. Testing should be prioritized for hospitalized health care workers. All staff with symptoms consistent with Covid-19 should be dealt with as if they have this infection regardless of the availability of test results.

General questions or comments about this advisory can be sent to [icp@health.ny.gov](mailto:icp@health.ny.gov), [covidadulcareinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidadulcareinfo@health.ny.gov), and/or [covidnursinghomeinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidnursinghomeinfo@health.ny.gov).