



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Administrative Order 20-17: COVID-19 Health Screening Policies and Procedures

We recognize that this new order is complex, and you may have lots of questions. Here are some of the things you may want to know. Questions are grouped into:

- Questions about the Screening Policy itself
- Questions about the online Screening Tool
- Questions about Screening Procedures

If after reviewing these questions and answers, you still have questions, please contact your supervisor. Afterwards, if you still have questions, please email: [COVID-19@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:COVID-19@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

#### Questions about the Screening Policy

**Q: Why is the County requiring all employees to be screened before in-person work?**

A: As we've learned over the last months, COVID-19 can be difficult and slow to diagnose. Checking daily for possible symptoms and exposure – along with wearing a mask, washing hands, and watching distance – are keys to reducing the spread of COVID-19. These screening procedures are meant to help Milwaukee County employees keep themselves, one another, and the people we serve safe.

**Q: Are other employers screening employees?**

A: Yes. This best practice of having employees screen for COVID-19 symptoms and exposure before they begin in-person work is a recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control<sup>1</sup> (CDC) as well as from the Medical College of Wisconsin<sup>2</sup> and has been adopted by employers across the region and nationally.

**Q: What are employees expected to do?**

A: Every employee is expected to complete a Screening Questionnaire and a temperature screen before beginning in-person work. In general, this will be a two-step process. Most commonly, employees will complete the Screening Questionnaire using the County's Screening Tool at home before coming to work and will have their temperature screened upon arriving at their workplace. Given the wide variety of work locations and types of work done by County employees, the specific steps you'll need to take will be communicated to you by your manager.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html>

<sup>2</sup>[https://coronavirus-mmac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Smart-Restart-Health-and-Safety-Checklist\\_05192020\\_v11-1.pdf](https://coronavirus-mmac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Smart-Restart-Health-and-Safety-Checklist_05192020_v11-1.pdf)

**Q: Will employees be compensated for time spent screening?**

A: No. The Fair Labor Standards Act does not require compensation for time spent on “activities which are preliminary or postliminary to “an employee’s principal activities,” as completing the Screening Questionnaire will be. This applies whether the screening takes place at home or at a County facility before an employee is permitted to work. The larger goal here is to ensure that employees are taking steps to protect their own health and the health of their co-workers. Once employees are used to the process and operational hurdles are smoothed out, we expect that the full screening process will take only a few minutes each day.

**Q: This screening does nothing to catch anyone who is asymptomatic. So how is this going to protect us from asymptomatic carriers?**

A: The CDC currently estimates that from 60 to 65 percent of individuals with COVID-19 have symptoms. While this order cannot fully stop the spread of COVID-19 among our employees, it can reduce the spread by ensuring that those with symptoms or exposure stay home and don’t infect their co-workers. Additionally, identifying employees who have been exposed to COVID-19, and those employees taking precautions, will help keep people who may be asymptomatic carriers away from others.

**Q: Why shouldn’t all employees be screened every day?**

A: As an employer, our first priority is ensuring that employees do not infect one another while at work, which is of primary concern on days when employees are interacting with each other during in-person work. Each department may assess the risks to its employees and may implement additional requirements for screening. Your manager will notify you if your department has additional screening standards, and teleworking employees are encouraged, if not required, to take the Health Questionnaire every day to monitor their own health.

**Q: Why aren’t visitors to County facilities being screened?**

A: While the first phase of this Administrative Order focuses on screening for employees, we are working on requirements for screening visitors to County facilities and expect the Order to address visitors later this month.

**Q: What questions am I expected to answer before I can start work?**

A: The Screening Questionnaire asks about whether you have any current symptoms that are commonly associated with COVID-19 and whether you have had any exposure to individuals with COVID-19 in the past 14 days. The actual questionnaire can be found on County Connect and the County website along with Administrative Order 20-17 on screening.

**Q: How will I access the Screening Questionnaire?**

A: We expect virtually all employees to complete the survey using the County’s online Survey Tool, described in the section below. Most will access it using a smart phone, either County-issued or a personal device. In some instances, employees may complete the survey at a kiosk at an entrance to a County facility or through an oral screen conducted by your department. Your manager will explain the plans your department is making to ensure you have ready access to the Screening Questionnaire.

**Q: I sometimes have a headache (or cough, or another symptom from the list.) Should I stay home?**

A: Keep in mind as you review the list of symptoms before going to work, the emphasis is on symptoms you **don’t expect**. If you routinely have headaches or a cough, those aren’t new or unexpected symptoms and you should go to work if you have no other new symptoms. But if any of these symptoms are new, or if you feel sick, then you should stay at home. While managers should ask specific questions about symptoms, they may ask follow-up questions like, “Is your symptom new or unexpected for you?” to be sure employees understand expectations.

**Q: I don't understand what Close Contact means. Can you please explain?**

A: Close Contact can come in many forms, and some are easier to identify than others. Some Close Contact involves direct physical contact, such as caring for someone in your household who has COVID-19; hugging or touching a person with COVID-19; sharing utensils with an infected person, or having someone with COVID-19 cough or otherwise spray respiratory droplets on you.

What is harder to identify is Close Contact with someone who is asymptomatic at the time you had contact and who is later diagnosed with COVID-19, such as a work colleague. In these cases, Close Contact has two components: how physically close you were to an individual infected with COVID-19 and how long you spend in the infected individual's company. With regard to distance, Close Contact means being within six (6) feet of someone with COVID-19, regardless of whether one or both of you is wearing a mask. Measuring time spent is trickier. As we learn more about how COVID-19 spreads, we've learned that virus particles may linger in the air for longer than initially thought. The CDC recently updated its definition of Close Contact to include spending 15 minutes or more **cumulatively** over a 24-hour period in the company of someone infected with COVID-19, from 2 days before illness onset (or, for an asymptomatic infected person, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the infected person was isolated..

An example may help. Say you spend 10 minutes on Monday morning sitting across a 4-foot desk from a colleague reviewing a report, and then you spend another 10 minutes at this desk on Monday afternoon discussing a client concern. If that colleague becomes ill on Tuesday, gets tested on Wednesday, and finds out Friday that they are COVID+, you will have had Close Contact with your colleague because you spent more than 15 minutes (a total of 20 minutes) with the infected person over a 24-hour period (Monday) within 48 hours of illness onset (Tuesday). If your colleague never developed symptoms but was tested on Wednesday and found out Friday that they are positive, then you would still be in close contact because you spent 20 minutes total within a 24-hour window in the two days before they were tested (Wednesday).

**Q: I work in a healthcare setting and may be around patients infected with COVID-19. Does this mean that I have had Close Contact if I spend a total of 15 minutes or more cumulatively through my workday around these patients?**

A: For employees at work in a healthcare or medical setting, Close Contact does not qualify if employees are using the CDC-recommended PPE when job duties were performed.

For correctional staff working in COVID+ dorms, as long as proper PPE is worn the entire time, standard patrolling of the dorm would also not qualify for Close Contact. However, any direct physical contact (for example, managing an altercation in the room that results in respiratory droplets or body fluids getting on the officer) would count as Close Contact, especially if PPE usage is disrupted.

**Q: What happens if I answer YES to a question on the Screening Questionnaire?**

A: If you answer YES to any Symptom question, your status is RED for Symptoms. If you answer YES to any Exposure question, your status is RED for Exposure.

**Q: What do I do if I screen Red for Symptoms or Red for Exposure?**

A: STAY HOME! You need to follow the guidance in Administrative Order 20-7. If you have Symptoms Compatible with COVID-19, follow Section III. If you have Exposure to COVID-19, follow Section IV. If you are a critical infrastructure worker who has been exposed but does not have symptoms, your manager may give you different quarantine instructions, but you should stay home until you receive those instructions.

**Q: Will employees with Red Status be required to have a COVID-19 test before returning to work?**

A: No. They are required to follow the instructions in Administrative Order 20-7, Section III for Symptoms of COVID-19 and Section IV for Exposure to COVID-19. Testing for COVID-19 is still not a perfect science and **receiving a negative test result does not necessarily mean that the individual is not infected**, especially if they have become infected recently. Further, infected individuals may continue to test positive for COVID-19 after their other symptoms have ended and after they are no longer spreading the virus to others.

**Q: The Administrative Order says it applies to “employees and contractors.” Who is included as a contractor for the purpose of screening?**

A: In the short term, contractors are those individuals working alongside County employees as part of the overall County workforce. Longer term, the Screening order will address visitors to County facilities, including contractors entering County facilities. Departments with networks of contractors who are delivering services on behalf of the County should work with these contractors to ensure these contractors are performing daily screening of their employees, volunteers, and other workers for symptoms and exposure in line with this Administrative Order.

**Q: What leave is available if I have to quarantine because of exposure?**

A: Employees should use their Expanded Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) bank of time should they be required to quarantine because of exposure. See the Federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act Administrative Order 20-10 for details.

**Q: I’m about to run out of leave. What can I do?**

A: We understand that as a result of the public health crisis, employees may have exhausted their EPSL balances and are running low or even running out of paid time off. These situations will be handled on a case by case basis and involve discussion with the employee’s manager, HR Business Partner, and Central Payroll. If you are running low on your paid time off balances, please reach out to your manager to initiate this discussion.

**Q: If employees are working a double shift, are they required to re-screen before starting their second 8-hour shift?**

A: The premise of the Questionnaire is that employees complete it prior to starting in-person work. The order doesn’t mandate re-taking the Questionnaire during a shift (even if it’s 16 hours long) but a department could certainly require that employees do so. Departments have the option to create additional requirements to protect the health of their employees. Employees working a double shift should self-monitor for symptoms and if they start to feel sick, they should go home.

## Questions about Online Screening Tool

**Q: Will employees have to download a County app in order to complete the Screening Questionnaire?**

A: No. The Screening Questionnaire is located on the County’s website and can be accessed from any device that connects to the Internet. It does not require an app to access. Anyone can access the screening tool, and you do not need to be connected to the County Internet.

**Q: Can employees use a personal phone or device to complete Screening Questionnaire?**

A: Yes. Employees and contractors may access the Screening Questionnaire from any personal device that connects to the Internet, including smart phones, tablets, and personal computers.

**Q: What if employees don't have a smart phone or another way to access the Screening Questionnaire?**

A: We are strongly encouraging all departments to work with employees to find ways for them to access the Screening Questionnaire online. We expect the CDC to continue to update screening standards as more is learned about transmitting COVID-19. By using an online tool, the County can update the Screening Questionnaire as needed, and employees can be sure of using the latest version. An online tool also allows to County to track trends among its workforce.

**Q: Why is the County collecting healthcare information about me? Isn't that a violation of HIPAA?**

A: The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) applies only to health information provided to doctors, medical professionals and healthcare organizations. Employers are allowed to request health information relevant to an employee's fitness for work. Note that Milwaukee County will not be storing any specific responses to questions about symptoms or exposure, only whether an employee screened Red or Green for symptoms or for exposure.

**Q: If managers receive reports with the status of individual employees, will this information be subject to open records requests? If so, isn't this a violation of employee privacy?**

A: The County Screening Tool will not collect information about any symptoms you report; it will only record your Green or Red status for Symptoms and Exposure. Even high-level information such employee health status is protected by privacy laws and will not be subject to public disclosure through Open Records requests.

**Q: What if I can't bring my phone onto my work site? How do I show my Green Status?**

A: Your manager will give you instructions on how your status will be checked. For example, they may check your Badge Status on your phone when you enter the workplace and have you place your phone in a locker. Or, they may have you take the Screening Questionnaire at home before work so that you follow department procedures for keeping technology out of the workplace, and they will use manager reporting developed by IMSD to verify your status.

**Q: What if I make a mistake filling out the Screening Questionnaire and get the wrong status badge?**

A: No problem, simply take the Questionnaire again by starting over at the website (<https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/COVID-19/MKE-Health-Screen>). If managers are tracking people's statuses online, they will have multiple entries for you and should look at the most-recent time stamp for the correct status.

## Questions about Screening Procedures

**Q: When do these new screening requirements take effect?**

A: The effective date of the order is Wednesday, November 11, and we expect employees to begin completing the Screening Questionnaire by then, even if in the short-term the screening must be done manually. Temperature screening is expected to be in place no later than November 23.

**Q: By what time each day are employees required to complete the Screening Questionnaire?**

A: Employees must complete the Screening Questionnaire within the 12-hour period before the start of their shift and are encouraged to complete the questionnaire at home as close to the start of their shift as possible. Managers will provide explicit instructions to employees, especially those working second, third, and weekend shifts, about what's expected.

**Q: How will screening work for employees who report directly to job sites, or who work second, third, or weekend shifts?**

A: Department managers will inform employees how to proceed. Some departments are installing kiosks for employees to complete the Screening Questionnaire and/or the temperature screening. Others will be relying on manager notifications from the Screening Tool, and/or performing some screening activities manually.

**Q: If my department or office would like to use a log sheet to verify employee's health screening statuses, is there a standard form we should use?**

A: Yes. Please use this [log sheet template](#) to collect information from employees and contractors certifying their Green Status. We will only collect basic information on the log sheet and if someone screens red, they do not need to report it on the sheet. Instead, individuals screening red should stay or go home and notify their supervisor immediately.

**Q: How and when will managers and supervisors be able to receive reports on employee status from the Screening Tool?**

A: IMSD, the County's technology team, is working on reporting for managers and supervisors. We will share information as it becomes available. For now, managers and supervisors who want reporting should email requests to: [COVID-19@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:COVID-19@milwaukeecountywi.gov). Note that until reporting from the Screening Tool is available, managers will need to use other ways to verify employee status, such as having employees show their Status badge at entry or sign a log acknowledging survey completion.