

[Safer Federal Workforce]

Updated CDC Guidance on COVID-19 Risk and Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [simplified and streamlined existing COVID-19 guidance](#) to make it easier to understand COVID-19 risk, prevention steps, post-exposure precautions, and what actions to take when individuals are sick or test positive with the virus.

This email from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force (Task Force) includes three actions agencies should take, as soon as possible and no later than Monday, August 22, consistent with CDC's updated guidance.

Included in its updated guidance, CDC has posted the following new or updated resources:

- [Understanding COVID-19 Exposure Risk](#)
- [Factors that Affect Your Risk of Getting Very Sick from COVID-19](#)
- [How to Protect Yourself and Others](#)
- [What to Do If You Were Exposed to COVID-19](#)
- [Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Community Levels](#)

Updates to Federal Agency COVID-19 Workplace Safety Protocols

Pursuant to Section 2 of Executive Order [13991](#) on “Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing,” executive agencies must follow CDC guidance for mask-wearing, maintaining physical distance, and adhering to other public health measures. Independent agencies are strongly encouraged to comply with the requirements of EO 13991. The Task Force will update its guidance to reflect CDC's streamlined guidance—first through initial guidance that will be issued soon on [SaferFederalWorkforce.gov](#), then through new and updated Frequently Asked Questions on [SaferFederalWorkforce.gov](#) to support agencies in expeditiously implementing safety protocols consistent with updated CDC and Task Force guidance, and later through updated Agency Model Safety Principles to support agencies in updating their COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plans, pursuant to OMB Memorandum M-21-15 and M-21-25.

As soon as possible and no later than Monday, August 22, 2022, agencies should take the following three actions:

1. **Stop any COVID-19 serial screening testing programs that differentiate among individuals based on their COVID-19 vaccination status.** Where agencies are currently conducting COVID-19 serial screening testing of individuals that does not differentiate among individuals based on their COVID-19 vaccination status, they may continue doing so pending further guidance from the Task Force. Agencies should not, however, implement any revised or new COVID-19 screening testing programs prior to receiving further guidance from the Task Force.

2. **Pause asking employees, onsite contractor employees, visitors to Federal facilities, or in-person attendees at agency-hosted meetings, events, and conferences to provide information about their COVID-19 vaccination status, regardless of COVID-19 Community Levels, where COVID-19 safety protocols do not vary based on vaccination status.** Consistent with CDC's new streamlined guidance, for most Federal workplaces, COVID-19 workplace safety protocols will not vary based on vaccination status or otherwise depend on vaccination information. Where this is the case, agencies should no longer request or collect vaccination status information. Agencies with employee COVID-19 vaccination requirements unrelated to EO 14043 and pursuant to other authorities can continue to require documentation of proof of vaccination from employees subject to those requirements, as can agencies with other setting-specific dependencies on collecting vaccination information from employees in those settings, in consultation with the Task Force, the agency's General Counsel, and the agency's Senior Agency Official for Privacy. The Government-wide [Certification of Vaccination form](#) *should not* continue to be used.
 - When agencies pause collecting vaccination status information, such agencies should continue to preserve their vaccination information collection systems and the information collected to date from employees in accordance with National Archives and Records Administration records schedules; COVID-19 workplace safety may change in the future, or collection of this information from Federal employees may otherwise need to resume.
3. **No longer require that individuals who are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and who have been exposed to the virus do not enter Federal facilities or do not interact with members of the public in person as part of their official responsibilities for at least 5 full days.** Rather, agencies should instruct all individuals exposed to someone with COVID-19 to follow post-exposure protocols in line with previous Task Force post-exposure [guidance](#) for individuals who are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, which is consistent with CDC's newly updated guidance for [what to do if any individual is exposed to COVID-19](#) (which is described further below).

Agencies should continue to monitor COVID-19 Community Levels for each Federal facility, continue to require mask-wearing for all individuals in Federal facilities when COVID-19 Community Levels are HIGH, and otherwise wait for further guidance from the Task Force, prior to further updating their COVID-19 workplace safety plans, protocols, and policies beyond the changes described in this section of this email.

Reminder on Labor Relations Obligations

Agencies should engage with employee unions at their earliest opportunity as they adjust agency COVID-19 workplace safety plans, protocols, and policies, and otherwise satisfy any applicable collective bargaining obligations under the law, if any, at the earliest opportunity, including on a post-implementation basis where appropriate in order to meet the mandatory deadline established by the Task Force.

Agencies should also review existing collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) to assess whether these updated requirements conflict with existing CBA provisions. To the extent existing CBA provisions exist, agencies are strongly encouraged to bring the

CBA into compliance with these updated requirements at the earliest opportunity permitted under the law.

Reminder on Setting-Specific Guidance and Requirements

It is important to note that the updated CDC guidance released today is intended to apply to community settings, including most workplace settings. CDC will continue to recommend additional protections in some settings where COVID-19 is more likely to spread quickly or cause severe disease if introduced. Guidance for healthcare settings, schools, congregate settings at higher risk for transmission, and travel are covered in stand-alone guidance documents that will be updated on CDC's website. For example, today, CDC also updated its [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#). Pursuant to Executive Order 13991, Federal agencies must follow CDC guidance related to certain settings where different or additional layers of prevention are recommended by CDC. Where there is a conflict with more general Safer Federal Workforce Task Force or CDC guidance, agencies must follow the setting-specific CDC guidance.

To be consistent with Task Force guidance, where a locality has imposed additional pandemic-related requirements more protective than those set forth in Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance, agencies would need to follow those additional local requirements in Federal buildings, in Federally controlled worksites, on Government-operated transportation conveyances, and on Federal land in that locality.

Discussion for CFO Act Agencies with CDC and the Task Force

During the next regularly scheduled President's Management Council (PMC) Staff-Level Weekly Call that will take place from 12:00 – 1:00 PM on Friday, August 12, 2022, CDC will review its simplified and streamlined guidance, and the Task Force will review the updates to agency COVID-19 workplace safety protocols described herein, answer questions from CFO Act agencies, and discuss next steps. In addition to PMC staff-level points of contact, CFO Act agency COVID-19 Coordination Team leads and CFO Act agency CHCOs are encouraged to attend.

Thank you for your continued partnership in protecting the health and safety of the Federal workforce and those we serve.

Overview of Core Components of Updated CDC COVID-19 Guidance

See below for an overview of core components of CDC's updated guidance. This overview does not reflect updates to existing Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance, which will be updated as discussed above.

As noted above, included in its updated guidance, CDC has posted the following new or updated resources:

- [Understanding COVID-19 Exposure Risk](#)

- [Factors that Affect Your Risk of Getting Very Sick from COVID-19](#)
- [How to Protect Yourself and Others](#)
- [What to Do If You Were Exposed to COVID-19](#)
- [Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Community Levels](#)

Prevention Actions

Compared to earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic, today the Nation is in a stronger place with more tools—like vaccination, boosters, and treatments—that can protect us from severe illness from COVID-19. Staying [up to date](#) with COVID-19 vaccines, including recommended booster doses, remains the best way to significantly lower the risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

In addition, CDC recommends using multiple layered prevention actions to reduce the risk of severe impacts from COVID-19 as [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) increase. Some of those measures include the following recommended actions.

At all COVID-19 Community Levels, CDC recommends the following actions:

- Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccination, including recommended booster doses;
- Making or maintaining [ventilation improvements](#);
- Following CDC recommendations for [isolation](#) if you have suspected or confirmed COVID-19; and
- Following CDC recommendations for [what to do if you are exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19.

When COVID-19 Community Levels are **MEDIUM** or **HIGH**:

- CDC recommends prioritizing for [screening testing](#) facilities and situations where (1) transmission risk is high and (2) the population served is at high risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 or there is limited access to healthcare. CDC does not recommend [serial screening testing](#) in most community settings, and CDC recommends that when [point-in-time or serial screening testing](#) is used, it should be applied regardless of vaccination status.
- If individuals have household or social contact with someone at high risk for getting very sick, they can consider self-testing to detect infection before contact and consider wearing a high-quality mask when indoors with them.

When the COVID-19 Community Level is **HIGH**:

- All people ages two years or older should wear a high-quality [mask](#) or respirator (such as an N95) indoors in public.

Post-Exposure Precautions

CDC recommends that, [following exposure to COVID-19](#), individuals wear a high-quality [mask](#) or respirator (such as an N95) when around others indoors for 10 full days after last exposure, watch for symptoms for 10 full days after last exposure, take precautions if they will be around people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19, and [get tested](#) at least 5 full days after last exposure—instead of quarantining at home, regardless of vaccination status. If they develop symptoms, they should [isolate](#) immediately and get tested.

Actions Individuals Should Take If They Have Symptoms or Test Positive

CDC recommends that individuals with [COVID-19 symptoms](#) stay home and [isolate](#) until they are able to [get tested](#). If they test negative, they can end isolation.

If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, they should stay home and isolate for at least 5 full days (day 0 being the day of symptom onset or, if asymptomatic, the day they were tested). If they had no symptoms, they may end isolation after day 5. If they had symptoms, they may end isolation after day 5 if they are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and their symptoms are improving. See CDC guidance on isolation for additional considerations regarding ending isolation.

After ending isolation, they should wear a high-quality mask or respirator (such as an N95) when around others through at least day 10. If they have access to antigen tests after they have ended isolation, they should consider using them. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, they may remove their mask sooner than day 10. If either of their antigen test results are positive, they should continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until they have two sequential negative results. This may mean they would need to continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.

After individuals have ended isolation, if their COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, they should restart isolation at day 0.