Alameda County Health Care Services Agency
Public Health Department
www.acphd.org

Colleen Chawla, Director
Kimi Watkins-Tartt, Director
Nicholas Moss, MD, Health Officer

Public Health Department: Main Line (510) 267-8000   COVID-19 Information: (510) 268-2101

COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments: (510) 268-4829

TO: **All Employers in Alameda County**

FROM: **Nicholas J. Moss, MD, MPH, Health Officer**

SUBJECT: Negative COVID-19 test results <u>NOT</u> required for return to work

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The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) is committed to supporting employers to ensure the health of everyone who works in Alameda County. We appreciate your compliance with State and local requirements for workplace safety, such as requiring the use of face coverings, conducting regular symptom checks, and supporting sick employees in staying home.

COVID-19 is widespread in our community so you may have employees who contract the virus. Per our Health Officer Orders, people with COVID-19 are required to stay home and away from others in isolation for at least 10 days. On day 11, if they have been symptom free for at least 24-hours without fever-reducing medications, they can leave isolation and return to work. **ACPHD strongly recommends employers allow people with COVID-19 to return to work 10 days after symptom onset (or from first positive test if no symptoms).**

Vaccinated employees who come into close contact with someone with COVID-19 do not need to quarantine as long as they remain asymptomatic and have not received a positive COVID-19 test result.

For **unvaccinated employees**, there are two options for determining the length of quarantine.

Option 1: Employees who do not get tested for COVID-19 should stay home for 10 days following exposure.

Option 2: Employees who receive a negative COVID-19 test result (test must occur **on day 5 or later**) should stay home for 7 days and can return to work on day 8. If the result is positive, or if the employee develops any symptoms of COVID-19, they must immediately isolate and contact their healthcare provider or the public health department for isolation guidance.

Please note that day of exposure is considered day 0.

These recommendations are the public health standard based on current scientific evidence and guidance from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Repeat testing for people who have previously tested positive is unnecessary and has little clinical value. Evidence is clear that the vast majority of people with COVID-19 are no longer infectious after 10 days.

Negative clearance testing is not an effective way to determine if a person is contagious, as very sensitive tests can still pick up on dead virus particles weeks after a person has stopped being contagious. Clearance testing also strains the health care infrastructure needed for people who have not been tested and those who are at high risk**. ACPHD does not provide clearance letters for people to return to work, and notes from doctors or medical providers are also not advised**.

Thank you for your cooperation and the important role that you play in keeping our communities healthy.

Resources for additional information:
- CDPH: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Updated-COVID-19-Testing-Guidance.aspx
- Cal/OSHA ETS: https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/ETS.html
- CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html
- ACPHD: http://www.acphd.org/media/568880/acphd-covid-19-release-from-iso-or-quar-and-return-to-work-criteria-english.pdf