

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL

Suggestions for Management of Employees Returning from Travel

Travel may pose elevated risk of infection with COVID. CDC guidance exists for determining risk of travel and possible actions afterwards (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>), but there is no standard approach as levels of risk vary. Following are some suggestions for employers in dealing with employees who travel:

1. Set policy about what will happen after employees return from travel, so they will know what to expect before planning travel. A preset policy, approved by Human Resources or management, is best to avoid differential treatment of employees, which can lead to liability.
2. On a case-by-case basis, evaluate risk of travel. Factors to evaluate include:
 - a. Destination(s): if community transmission in destination is high or increasing substantially, this is higher risk than travelling to an area with lower rates of community transmission. This information may be difficult to find, but CDC's COVID Data Tracker <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/> shows cases per 100,000 and cases in last 7 days per state, which give an idea of degree of community transmission (although cumulative since beginning of pandemic). Additionally, CMS lists the county-level testing positivity rate in last 7 days under "COVID-19 Testing" at <https://data.cms.gov/stories/s/COVID-19-Nursing-Home-Data/bkwz-xpvg>.
 - b. Mode of travel: car least risky (unless multiple people in car), airplane (especially long flights) more risky and cruises very risky. Prolonged travel on public transportation also higher risk.
 - c. Length of travel: longer trips more risk than short trips.
 - d. Activities during travel: higher risk activities include attendance at large social gatherings (weddings, funerals, parties), or mass gathering (demonstrations, sporting events, concerts, etc.), frequenting restaurants, bars or other crowded public, especially if social distancing and masking not practiced.
3. Using above factors, determine if travel was higher risk or lower risk.
4. If travel was lower risk, continue routine temperature check and symptom screening at beginning of each shift, but ask employee to self-monitor closely for any symptoms. Alternatively, may require more frequent active monitoring, if desired, with temperature and symptom checks twice per shift until 14 days after return.
5. If travel high risk, determine further action based on employee's job duties:
 - a. If employee can work from home, arrange remote work and consider testing for COVID-19 at 10-14 days after return
 - b. If employee cannot work from home, action depends on staffing needs:
 - i. If employee's job duties not critical, may choose to furlough with COVID testing at 10-14 days
 - ii. If employee's job duties critical, consider testing immediately upon return if trip was lengthy, perform active monitoring of temperature and symptoms twice per shift, and test at 10-14 days after return.