PRACTICAL ACTION FOR SOUTH DAKOTA BUSINESSES:
WHAT DO I DO WHEN AN EMPLOYEE HAS TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

Businesses should already be implementing health and sanitation practices to prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC), State of South Dakota, and others have provided many documents and guidance related to "Responding to a COVID-19 Positive Employee." This "Practical Action" document seeks to provide a shorthand, easy-to-understand series of steps an employer can take to respond to a COVID-19-positive employee. It supplements (it does not replace) other guidance and is not legal advice.

IF AN EMPLOYEE TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19:

- The employee should not come to work or should be sent home. The employee should separate from other people, monitor symptoms, call ahead before visiting a doctor, wear a mask, wash hands often, and clean surfaces regularly.

- An employee could return to work 10 days after a test or after symptoms first appeared; once respiratory symptoms have improved; and after 3 days with no fever. (So, an asymptomatic employee could return to work 10 days after a positive test; a symptomatic employee could return to work after 3 days with no fever and once respiratory symptoms have improved, but no earlier than 10 days after the symptoms first appeared.)

- An asymptomatic employee could return to work prior to the 10-day period after having two negative tests in a row, at least 24 hours apart.

WHAT STEPS SHOULD A BUSINESS TAKE AFTER HAVING AN EMPLOYEE TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

- The CDC states that, "In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility." The State of South Dakota has no statewide mandates regarding actions a business must take, but recommends following CDC guidance. Local ordinances may be in place, however.

- The business does not need to contact the South Dakota Department of Health. If an employee tests positive, the SDDOH will likely contact the business directly about tracing other employees who may have been in close contact (identified as 15 consecutive minutes or longer within 6 feet or less). Contact from the SDDOH may not happen in all cases, however.
  Other close contact instances may include: providing direct home care to a COVID-19 positive individual; direct physical contact (touching, hugging, etc.); sharing eating or drinking utensils; or if they coughed, sneezed, or otherwise shared respiratory droplets with an individual.

- Co-workers with "close contact" exposure to an employee who has tested positive may receive a recommendation to quarantine for 14 days. However, asymptomatic employees may be permitted to work if they wear a facemask for 14 days after exposure. Employees exhibiting symptoms should not come to work.

- If it has been less than 7 days since the employee who tested positive has been in the facility, close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the individual. Wait as long as possible (up to 24 hours) to clean and disinfect the area (to reduce the risk of exposure to respiratory droplets).

- If it has been more than 7 days since the employee who tested positive was in the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routine cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces.

- Inform your employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 (but maintain ADA and HIPAA confidentiality). Remind employees to maintain good health practices, including regular hand washing, and to self-monitor for symptoms. Asymptomatic co-workers awaiting test results may continue to work; employees with symptoms should stay home.

- Local health care providers are encouraged to provide tests to co-workers of employees who have tested positive, whether or not the co-workers are demonstrating symptoms. Consider contacting your local health care provider to set up a testing regimen for your other employees. You will likely be charged for these tests.

This information was compiled by the South Dakota Retailers Association.

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