

Screening Employees

Pandemics like COVID-19, also known as coronavirus, create a variety of unusual circumstances that you must be able to adjust to quickly. This guide provides information and best practices related to screening your employees at the workplace related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Screening Visitors and Employees:

Employers should become aware if visitors or employees returning to work after an absence have potentially been exposed to COVID-19. This would include requesting them to identify if they had travelled outside the US, been on a cruise, or had contact with a person suspected of COVID-19.

Recommended steps:

- Ensure you have controlled entry points to your facility that are separate from your general employee areas.
- Set-up a preliminary screening location or desk at these locations and ask visitors and employees to self-declare positive responses to the screening questions.
- Maintain a simple, easy, and fact-based screening process.
- Consider implementing a plan to measure your employees' temperatures upon entry to your facility.

Measuring Employee's Temperatures:

As of March 18, the EEOC permitted employers to begin measuring employees' body temperatures. However, employers should be aware that some people with COVID-19 do not have a fever. Employers may ask employees if they are experiencing any of the symptoms of the pandemic virus. For COVID-19, these include symptoms such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat. Employers must maintain all information about employee illness as a confidential medical record in compliance with the ADA.

Recommended steps:

- Employers should develop and stick to an objective procedure for taking temperatures.
- If a medical professional is on staff, that individual should administer the screenings.
- If no medical staff is available, then the ideal administrator should be within HR or senior management.
- Limit the number of designated employees that will take temperatures to provide consistency.
- Employee health information should be kept confidential, but not in the employee's personnel files.
- Employees standing in line to have their temperature taken should stay 6 feet apart.
- Infrared digital thermometers should be used.

Additional Resources:

- CIRAS COVID-19 Website: www.ciras.iastate.edu/COVID-19
- Center for Disease Control (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH): <https://idph.iowa.gov/>
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC): <https://www.eeoc.gov/>

For help responding to the COVID-19 emergency or implementing a response plan, contact:

Marc Schneider (563-221-1596, maschn@iastate.edu) or Mike O'Donnell (515-509-4379, modonnll@iastate.edu)

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