

# Smith County Covid-19 Testing and Return to Work Guidelines

## **I. Definitions**

- a. Suspected Patient. A “Suspected Patient” is an employee who exhibits one or more of the following symptoms of COVID-19: (i) Fever of 100.4 F or higher; (ii) dry cough and difficulty breathing; (iii) chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headaches, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of taste, or sense of smell; or (iv) any other symptom or combination of symptoms listed by the CDC.
- b. Exposed Employee. An “Exposed Employee” is someone who has had extended direct contact with a Suspected Patient or Confirmed Patient, which is defined as direct continuous contact at a distance of 6-feet or less for a continuous period of fifteen minutes or more when either individual was not wearing a mask.
- c. Confirmed Patient. A “Confirmed Patient” is defined as an employee who has actually received a positive test result for COVID-19.
- d. Recovered Patient. A “Recovered Patient” is defined as an employee who previously tested positive for COVID-19.

## **II. Testing**

The County will make arrangements and pay for COVID-19 testing under the following three circumstances: (1) when an Employee is a Suspected Patient; (2) when an Employee is an Exposed Employee; or (3) when an Employee needs confirmation that he or she is a Recovered Patient before returning to work. Employees who do not fall within one of these categories still remain at liberty to seek a COVID-19 test on their own pursuant to the terms and conditions of their health insurance coverage, but such testing will be billed to the patient according to the terms of their health insurance coverage.

Employees are encouraged to utilize any available drive-through or walk-up testing centers available in Smith County at the time when they need to be tested. When drive-through or walk-up testing centers are not available or as otherwise authorized by the County Judge or Emergency Management Coordinator, the County will provide and pay for COVID-19 testing through Southern Health Partners under the Supervision of Dr. White as follows:

- Dr. White or licensed EMT's with the Fire Marshal's office (all of whom will be donned with proper PPE) will administer the tests.

- Testing will be conducted at 218 E. Elm St., Tyler, Texas 75702 (Former City of Tyler Downtown Fire Station), or at another location at the direction of Dr. White, HR, or the Smith County Fire Marshal.
- The Department Head/Elected Official will contact Smith County HR directly, who will coordinate administration of the test.
- Advanta Analytical Laboratories will test the specimens, utilizing PCR Testing.
- The test specimen will be received and transported to Lab by Fire Marshal Staff, regardless of who is conducting the tests

Smith County HR will make best efforts to have tests kits ready and available for immediate testing. The County will make best efforts to ensure that results are returned within 24 hours of the administration of the test. Test results will be delivered to (i) the Employee (ii) Smith County HR Director, Esmerelda Delmas and (iii) the Employee's Department Head or supervising Elected Official. Each of those receiving parties will treat such information as strictly confidential and shall not publicize or disseminate that information to any other individual other than those otherwise authorized to receive such information (i.e. the County Judge). The testing results shall be confidentially retained by the Smith County HR Director; however, no documentation of testing will be placed in the Employee's personnel file.

Notwithstanding these guidelines, Dr. White has discretion to order or withhold from ordering or administering a COVID-19 test based on his informed medical judgment. If an Employee refuses testing, they will be sent home immediately, and will not be able to return to work unless cleared by a medical provider or are otherwise qualified to return to work under the guidelines set forth below. Employees refusing testing may be required to utilize their PTO time for days off work, and may not be qualified to utilize special paid administrative time off authorized by the Commissioners Court for COVID-19 related absences.

### **III. Workplace Response for Suspected Patients, Confirmed Patients, or Exposed Employees**

Any employee who is a Suspected Patient or Confirmed Patient should be sent home immediately. All Suspected Patients will be tested as soon as possible, in accordance with the testing procedures in these Guidelines. Each employee testing positive or with symptoms of COVID-19 are encouraged to contact their primary care physician or medical provider immediately, and seek medical treatment if necessary.

Without violating HIPAA laws, Department Heads & Elected Officials should conduct an internal assessment to determine individuals who have had recent direct contact with positive and/or symptomatic individual who might meet the definition of a Suspected Patient. Department Heads & Elected Officials are encouraged to notify Smith County HR of any additional persons who are or may be Suspected Patients. For question relating to HIPAA-compliant contact tracing activities, Department Heads & Elected Officials should contact Thomas Wilson in the Smith County District Attorneys' Office. For other contact racing questions, please contact the Smith County Fire Marshal.

Employees awaiting test results should not return to work before test results are returned.

**IV. Employees who are Not a Suspected Patient, Confirmed Patient, or an Exposed Employee**

Employees who do not meet the definition of a Suspected Patient or Exposed Employee still remain at liberty to seek a COVID-19 test on their own pursuant to the terms and conditions of their health insurance coverage, but such testing will be billed to the patient according to the terms of their health insurance coverage. At the discretion of the County Judge or Emergency Management Coordinator, an employee who does not otherwise meet the definition of a Suspected Employee or Exposed Employee may still be authorized to receive free testing under these Guidelines if special circumstances warrant, subject to testing availability. Special circumstances may exist if because of their employment with the County, the Employee has had non-extended contact, but is a person who is at a higher risk of exposure or within a known vulnerable population.

**V. Return to Work Guidelines**

If an Employee is a Suspected Patient, Exposed Employee, or Confirmed Patient, that Employee should be excluded from work until the earlier of (i) 14 days from the date of the onset of showing symptoms or the date of exposure; (ii) the date on which the Suspected Patient or Exposed Employee is symptom free for at least 72 hours; (iii) after receiving medical clearance from the employee's medical provider or (iv) the date on which the employee obtains a test that returns a negative test finding for COVID-19.