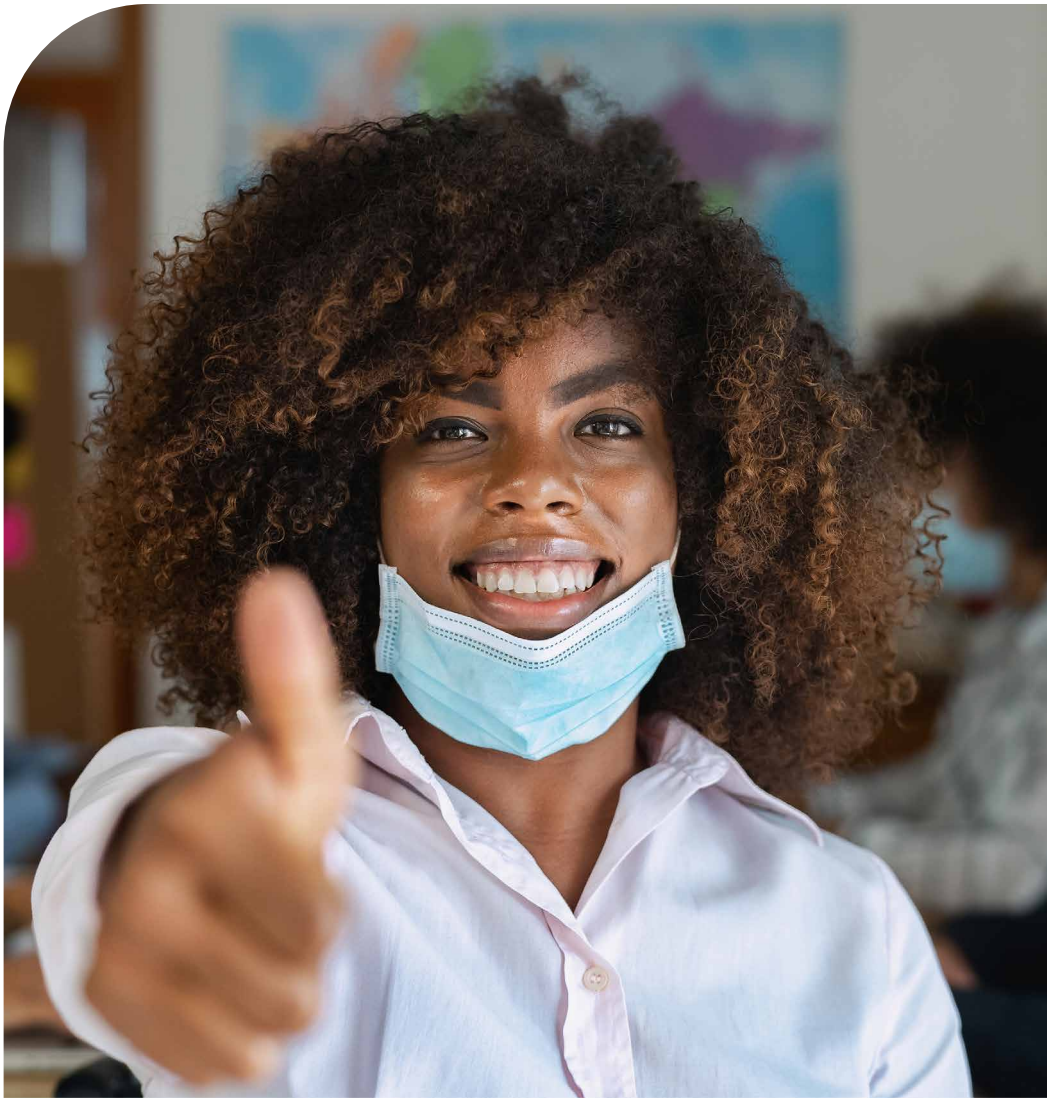




Western Cape
Government

BETTER TOGETHER.



COVID-19: Addressing the risk

HOW TO MANAGE EMPLOYEES RETURNING TO WORK
AFTER COVID-19-RELATED QUARANTINE OR ISOLATION

How to manage employees returning to work after COVID-19-related quarantine or isolation

BACKGROUND

Employees who are close contacts of known COVID-19 cases need to self-quarantine for a period of 10 days from the last day of contact with the known case before they may return to work. A negative COVID-19 test is not required in order to return to work.

Asymptomatic employees who test positive for COVID-19 need to self-isolate for a period of 10 days after the date of the test before they may return to work. A negative COVID-19 test is not required in order to return to work.

COVID-19 infected employees with mild diseases need to self-isolate for 10 days after the date of the first symptoms, while employees with more severe disease need to remain in isolation until 10 days after clinical stability has been regained. A negative COVID-19 test is not required in order to return to work.

On returning to work, the employer has a responsibility to ensure that:

- Returning employees are fit to return to work.
- They are not contagious to their co-workers.



PROCESS

It is recommended that an employee returning from quarantine or isolation needs to undergo a return-to-work interview prior to returning to the workplace. This interview can be done by the occupational medical services – if available to the employer. If no occupational medical service is available, it can also be done by human resource or line management functionaries.

The following needs to be asked during this interview:

- Employees returning from quarantine need to provide information on:
 - Last date of contact with the COVID-19 positive source.
 - Did they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 during quarantine or test positive for COVID-19? If so, they need to be managed like the employees returning from isolation – as described below.
 - If not, have 10 days passed since the last contact with the COVID-19 positive source?
 - Are they asymptomatic?
- Employees returning from isolation need to provide information on:
 - For those that suffered mild disease, an indication of the first day of their symptoms or, if asymptomatic, the date the positive test was collected?
 - Have 10 days passed since either of the 2 dates referred to above?
 - Is the employee asymptomatic now?
 - For those that suffered more severe symptoms – requiring oxygen treatment or hospitalisation:
 - have 10 days passed since the last time oxygen was needed, or the employee discharged from hospital?
 - Is the employee asymptomatic now?



If there are no concerns noted from a fitness to work or infectiousness perspective, the employee may return to work. The returning employees need to be reminded that they must always wear masks while at work, and frequent hand sanitization remains necessary.

It would also be prudent to follow up with the returning employee again within 3 days - to ensure that the employee remains well and coping.

Stigmatisation of employees who return from Covid-related sick leave may also occur. Employers should have an information campaign debunking myths surrounding the Covid infection. Employees who experience stigmatisation behaviour by their co-workers, should be encouraged to report this to HR for decisive action.

