

Cherokee County

Contagious Temporary Illness Policy and Procedures

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to offer guidance to employees and supervisors in the event of an employee's contagious temporary illness. Cherokee County understands that employees who are ill with a contagious temporary illness such as H1N1, colds, and other viruses still need to continue with their normal daily activities, which includes working. In determining whether an employee with a short-term temporary contagious illness may continue to work, several factors need to be considered. First, the employee should be able to perform the essential job duties of his job (with or without reasonable accommodation) and meet regular performance standards. In the judgment of Cherokee County management, the employee's continued presence in the work place should pose no risk to either the employee, fellow coworkers, or to the public. If an employee disputes the County's determination that such a risk exists, the employee must submit a statement from his or her attending health care provider that the employee's continued presence in the work place poses no significant health risk to the employee, other employees, customers, or the public.

Definitions

- **Control measures:** measures taken to attempt to restrict the severity of an outbreak of a communicable temporary illness
- **Epidemic:** a disease occurring suddenly in a community, region or country in numbers clearly in excess of normal. This includes the occurrence of several cases of a disease associated with a common source.
- **Pandemic:** the worldwide outbreak of a serious communicable disease in numbers clearly in excess of normal.
- **Incubation period:** the time, usually in days, between exposure to an illness and the onset of symptoms.
- **Isolation [Authority: GS 130A-2 (3a)]:** restriction of movement and/or action of individuals infected with a communicable disease to reduce the chance of spreading disease.
- **Quarantine [Authority: GS 130A-2 (7a)]:** restriction of movement and/or action of individuals who are known to have been exposed to or may reasonably be suspected to have been exposed to a communicable disease and who do not yet show signs or symptoms of infection.
- **Mandatory employees:** employees with permanent, probationary, time-limited or trainee appointments who are required to work during a public health emergency because their positions have been designated by their agencies as mandatory to agency operations during the emergency.
- **Social distancing:** actions taken to reduce the opportunities for close contact between people in order to limit the spread of a disease.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees are asked to stay at home and use their paid leave if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms. Symptoms of Seasonal and H1N1 Flu usually include the following:

- Fever of 100 degrees or greater
- Cough, sore throat, body aches, headache and other respiratory symptoms such as runny nose and sneezing
- Some children with H1N1 Flu also have vomiting and diarrhea

An employee who becomes ill with flu-like symptoms while at work should immediately report to his/her supervisor and leave the work place as soon as possible. He/she should put on a surgical mask to cut down on the risk of exposing other employees and the public until he/she has exited the work place. Employees who have exhausted paid leave will be granted leave without pay of up to one week for either their own illness or to care for an ill family member. The need for additional unpaid leave will be handled on a case-by-case basis and will depend on each individual's extenuating circumstances. You should not return to work until you have been fever free for 24 hours without taking fever reducing medications such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

Health care employees who develop flu-like symptoms while at work should immediately contact their supervisor, put on a mask, reassign patient care, and leave the work place as soon as possible to avoid exposing others. Health care workers who have had a recognized, unprotected close contact to a person with confirmed or suspected influenza during that person's infectious period should perform careful self-monitoring and should be immediately excluded from work if symptoms of influenza develop.

Supervisor Responsibilities

During the flu season, supervisors should do the following:

- Encourage employees who become ill with flu-like symptoms while at work to put on a face mask and exit the work place as soon as possible. Remind them that employees are given paid leave for such instances. If an employee has exhausted all paid leave, explain that he will be granted leave without pay until the illness has abated. Family medical leave may be granted if the illness meets the definition for FMLA designation.
- Ask your employees to stay at home if they are exhibiting flu-like symptoms. They should consult their health care provider to see if taking an antiviral medication is recommended. Antiviral medications, given early enough in the illness, can often reduce the length and severity of symptoms. A prescription is necessary to receive antiviral medication. Some health care providers may only recommend antiviral medications for persons with other health problems that put them at increased risk for complications from the flu (i.e. asthma, heart conditions, pregnancy, etc.) Remind employees that they should not return to work until they have been fever free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medications.
- Encourage everyone at work to wash their hands frequently, especially after coughing or sneezing. Use tissues to cover the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and then

throw them away. If a tissue is not available, advise employees that they should sneeze or cough into their elbow.

- Remind employees that it is important not to use another employee's phone, pencils and other office tools, especially if others are exhibiting symptoms of illness.
- Provide for cross-training of employees so work may continue as smoothly as possible in the event of the absence of several employees at one time.

County responsibilities

Cherokee County will provide both the Seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccine (when applicable) to employees at no cost to the employee.

Face masks will be made available for employees to use if they become ill while at work or if they are dealing with clients who may be exhibiting flu-like symptoms.

The County will provide education on proper hygiene techniques, provide adequate hand-washing facilities and offer other assistance as needed to ensure a hygienic work place.

Control Measures

The County urges departments to use social distancing measures as a first defense against the spread of a contagious temporary illness. Examples of social distancing include reducing face-to-face exposure by using conference calls and video conferencing; avoiding unnecessary travel; canceling meetings, workshops, training sessions and scheduled events; and installing protective barriers between work stations or increasing space between workers. In the event that isolation or a quarantine become necessary as control measures to mitigate the spread of a communicable disease, the directives for those measures would be issued by our Local Health Director under the guidance of the NC Commission for Public Health. In cases of extreme absenteeism, the County governing body or the County Manager have the authority to close County offices if necessary.

Mandatory Employees

Each department shall predetermine and designate mandatory operations and designate the employees to staff these operations.

Mandatory employees may be excused from work if they are quarantined or ill, if they are required to care for a member of the immediate family who is quarantined or ill or if they are a parent (or guardian) who is required to stay home with underage children because of the closure of a day care facility, public school or eldercare facility.

Each department shall maintain a list of mandatory employees by position, including current employee name and contact information. The department shall develop an alternative plan for personnel in case the designated mandatory personnel are unable to work. Alternative workers may include current employees who are not designated as mandatory but who possess the skills

to fill in for mandatory employees, retirees, contract workers or other temporary employees. This will be especially important in a pandemic that may last for several weeks or months.

Employees who are designated as mandatory shall be notified of such designation and the requirement to report for or remain at work in emergency situations. If mandatory personnel are required to remain at the worksite for an extended period of time, the County will provide adequate housing and food.

Employees designated as mandatory may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment for willful failure to report for or remain at work. Each situation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine appropriate action.