

Guidance for Employers

Leave arising from COVID-19 exposure

(updated March 23, 2022)

Further to the circular from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, dated February 24, 2022, the BEC continues to provide up-to-date advice for employers on the treatment of leave arising from COVID-19 exposure. Given the updated circular, employers are guided as follows;

Primary contacts are contacts who have been exposed to a positive case.

Primary contact (who tested negative):

- Primary contacts who have been exposed to a positive case, can **ONLY** report to work following a negative Rapid Antigen Test.
- After three (3) days, following exposure to a positive case, the primary contact should get a PCR test to confirm that they did not contract the virus. During this time the primary contact should continue to follow the protocols.
- Should this person become ill, they should seek immediate medical attention and will be guided by the Public Health Officials.
- If the infected person is an individual who requires regular care, such as a young child or elderly person, **the caregiver will be required** to quarantine and will be guided by the Public Health Officials.

Primary contact (who tested positive):

- Following the most recent circular, primary contacts who test positive are expected to isolate and are **unable** to report to work. These primary contacts will be guided by the Public Health Officials.

- This means that employees who test positive are entitled to sick leave and may claim sick benefits through the National Insurance Department (NIS). The National Insurance and Ministry of Health and Wellness confirmed that infected persons will be guided by the medical practitioners, on the process for submitting their sickness benefit claims.

Based on the updated circulars from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, employers are advised as follows;

- 1) Employers are reminded that they can implement a clearly defined policy which will assist with the effective management of COVID-19 in the workplace. The policy will guide how the workplace responds, while considering the operational risks. Policy considerations should include;
 - The process for employees to inform management of possible exposure and or infection.
 - Provisions for remote work if this option can be utilised based on the circumstances.
 - Compliance for strict adherence to the policy and repercussions.
- 2) Should the employer ask the employee to stay away from the workplace to minimise risk to the organisation the following can be utilised:
 - Remote work
 - Company leave e.g. personal days
- 3) Employers should encourage employees to use all measures such as physical distancing, masking, sanitising, and good ventilation, to reduce risks, not only for persons who test positive but generally. The Ministry of Health continues to advise on the strict adherence of these protocols.
- 4) Employers should continue to follow the Ministry of Health and Wellness for guidelines on cleaning in a COVID-19 environment and can contact Public Health Officials for further guidance.
- 5) The Ministry of Health has advised that routine closures and industrial cleaning are not required if a person at a workplace tested positive. This means that employers do not need to close businesses after every positive case.



Barbados Employers'
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This guidance is not intended to be a policy document but to provide general guidance for managing leave due to COVID-19 exposure. Employers are advised to continue to be guided by the Ministry of Health and Wellness and Public Health Officials in the development of their protocols. Please contact the BEC for further guidance on your policies and procedures.

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