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To: Ohio EMS providers, EMS agencies, and EMS medical directors

From: Carol A. Cunningham, M.D., FAAEM, FAEMS  
State Medical Director

Date: July 20, 2020

**RE: Updated CDC Guidance for Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel**

The maintenance of our healthcare workforce is essential to the COVID-19 pandemic response, and the donning of the appropriate personal protective equipment is our first line of defense. A reduction of manpower due to illness presents a challenge to all EMS systems and can impose a negative operational impact on the emergency response team, particularly for volunteer and smaller EMS agencies.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an updated interim guidance on the duration of isolation following COVID-19 infection on July 20, 2020. The entire guidance can be accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>. In summary, the highlights include the following measures:

- For most persons with COVID-19, isolation and precautions can generally be discontinued 10 days after symptom onset and resolution of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications and with improvement in other symptoms.
- For persons with severe to critical illness or who are severely immunocompromised, the recommended duration of isolation and precautions was extended to 20 days after symptom onset (or, for asymptomatic severely immunocompromised persons, 20 days after their initial positive SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic test).
- For persons previously diagnosed with COVID-19 who remain asymptomatic after recovery, retesting is not recommended within 3 months after the date of symptom onset for the initial COVID-19 infection (or, for persons who never developed symptoms, the date of the first positive RT-PCR test for SARS-CoV-2).

**Mission Statement**

*"to save lives, reduce injuries and economic loss, to administer Ohio's motor vehicle laws and to preserve the safety and well being of all citizens with the most cost-effective and service-oriented methods available."*

The portion of the updated CDC guidance that includes the criteria to return to work for healthcare personnel can be accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/return-to-work.html>. The highlights of the guidance that are applicable to healthcare personnel, including EMS providers, for the process of returning to work include the following recommendations:

- Except for rare situations, a test-based strategy is no longer recommended to determine when to allow healthcare personnel to return to work.
- Symptom-based criteria were modified as follows: changed from “at least 72 hours” to “at least 24 hours” have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, and changed from “improvement in respiratory symptoms” to “improvement in symptoms” to address the expanding list of symptoms associated with COVID-19.
- For healthcare personnel with severe to critical illness or who are severely immunocompromised, the recommended duration for work exclusion was extended to 20 days after symptom onset (or, for asymptomatic severely immunocompromised healthcare personnel, 20 days after their initial positive SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic test).

As I have stated in previous communiques, the COVID-19 pandemic is a dynamically evolving event as the research continues to reveal new evidence about the virus. The Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of EMS will continue to provide additional information to the Ohio EMS community as it becomes available. Once again, I sincerely thank you for your dedicated service to the residents and visitors of the State of Ohio and to the practice of EMS medicine.