Fact Sheet: Returning to the Worksite and Employee Self-Certification Process

In reconstituting County worksites, we are working hard to provide a safe work environment – for County employees and the residents we serve. The County has implemented a comprehensive program with this objective in mind, and the various components of this comprehensive program are discussed in other Fact Sheets. The Employee Self-Certification process is a component of this program and has several objectives:

- Ensuring that employees are aware of symptoms of COVID-19 symptoms (e.g., fever or symptoms of acute respiratory illness) and other situations that may raise concerns about possible COVID-19 risks (e.g., close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 person; recent quarantine due to or testing for COVID-19).
- Lowering the risk of an employee who is experiencing these symptoms or has been in a situation raising concerns about COVID-19 risks to enter the worksite, by having the employee self-identify the presence of these symptoms/conditions and – if those symptoms/conditions exist – to have the County's Office of Medical Services (OMS) evaluate the employee for potential risks that would prevent the employee from entering the workplace.
- Mitigating concerns and fears that employees may have about returning to the workplace.

The Employee Self-Certification process directly focuses on the first two objectives. We also hope that the process will, along with the other steps taken to ensure a safe work environment, mitigate employee concerns. Please note that the County currently is not requiring all employees to be tested for COVID-19 as a condition of returning to work. And only in certain situations (e.g., camp instructors) are employee required to have their temperatures checked before entering the worksite.

If an employee has concerns about returning to the workplace, because of being in a high-risk category themselves or having a high-risk family member, or for other medical reasons, the employee should contact OMS (providing any appropriate medical documentation). [NOTE: Per the CDC, high-risk is defined by either being over the age of 65 or by having one of certain listed medical conditions. The decision about whether to return high risk employees to work will be guided by medical science and by agreement with the unions.]

If an employee is experiencing other (non-medical) issues concerning their return to the County workplace, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), ComPsych Guidance Resources, provides free, confidential, support and resources to help you manage life's changes and challenges. More information is available at: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HR/LiveWell/Resources.html.

A number of departments (Alcohol Beverage Services, Fire and Rescue Services, and the Health and Human Services Crisis Center) that have continued to work throughout the COVID crisis have employee screening procedures in place. And, some programs, such as Recreation Department Camps, have legally mandated screening procedures. The County is conducting pilots of the use of Self-Certification by employees prior to the employee returning to other worksites. The pilots are being conducted with Libraries and DOT Ride On. Further expansion of the pilots has not been negotiated with the unions. The information below is accurate with respect to the current pilots only, and is subject to change in the future.

Employee Self-Assessment COVID-19 Screening Pilot

Under the pilots being conducted with Libraries and DOT Ride On, the "Employee Self-Assessment COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire" ("Questionnaire) must be completed prior to the employee returning to the worksite. Self-Assessment/Certification will be available either as an online or hardcopy process. The Questionnaire contains four questions concerning the following:

- Whether the employee is currently experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (e.g., fever or symptoms of acute respiratory illness);
- Close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 person;
- Recent quarantine due to or testing for COVID-19.

If employees are returning to the worksite, even just to retrieve records/files/etc., they should have completed the Self-Certification process.

Once the certification is submitted to OMS, a determination of cleared or not cleared will be made. The clearance notification will be sent to the employee, the supervisor, and the COVID point-of-contact (POC) for the department. If an employee shows up without a clearance, they should be advised they cannot report to work at the worksite until they have completed the certification and clearance received. The employee would be required to take leave (annual or PTO) until they are able to return to work.

Generally, the process is as follows:

1. Employee goes online at https://eportal.montgomerycountymd.gov/goto/Covid19ScreenQuestions/, and completes/submits the "Employee Self-Assessment COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire."

2. If the employee is unable to go online to complete the Questionnaire, they must contact their supervisor and arrange to pick-up a hard-copy of the Questionnaire prior to reporting for their first shift.

3. If the employee completes the Questionnaire online and answers "YES" to any of the four questions, the employee would contact/advise their supervisor and await further instructions from their supervisor (or return home if they are at the worksite) prior to reporting to the worksite. If not completed online, the completed hard-copy of the Questionnaire would be provided by the employee to their supervisor, who would then forward the completed/signed form to OMS and await further guidance from OMS.

4. If the employee answers "NO to the four questions, OR if OMS has given clearance for the employee, the employee may enter the worksite and begin their scheduled work/shift.

In addition to notification of the employee's certification being sent to their supervisor, notification would also be sent to the department COVID point of contact.