



FAQs: Workers Who Must Isolate or Quarantine Due to COVID-19

Updated May 14, 2021

This guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFPDH) for local use. It will be posted at sfcdcp.org/i&q

Primary changes to earlier versions:

- Removes the requirement for fully vaccinated, asymptomatic people to quarantine.
- Removed reference to [Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\)](#), the [Disaster Relief Fund for Immigrants](#), and other programs and resources that are outdated or have expired.

AUDIENCE: Workers who have been asked to quarantine or isolate because they have either been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 or they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 themselves.

BACKGROUND: The arrival of COVID-19 has led to several new Federal, State, and Local laws that assist workers who must “isolate” because they are diagnosed with COVID-19 or “quarantine” because they have close contact with someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why would I have to miss work related to COVID-19?

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, you are required to self-isolate and stay out of work for at least 10 days (the minimum possible period of isolation) and until you haven’t had a fever for 24 hours (without the use of a fever reducing medication) and you’ve been feeling better as stated on sfcdcp.org/rtw. If you are unable to telework, your employer is required to allow you time off from work while you are required to self-isolate.

If you were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you are required to self-quarantine and stay out of work for 10 days (the minimum period of quarantine) since the last time you had close contact with that person. Exceptions apply for certain workers: see www.sfcdcp.org/Home-Isolation-Quarantine-Guidelines or www.sfcdcp.org/i&q for other languages. If you are unable to telework, your employer must allow you time off from work while you are required to self-quarantine.

- A “**close contact**” is someone who was within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for a period of time that adds up to at least 15 minutes in 24 hours, masked or unmasked, when that person was contagious. People with COVID-19 are considered contagious starting 48 hours before their symptoms began until 1) they haven’t had a fever for at least 24 hours, 2) their symptoms have improved, AND 3) at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms began. If the person with COVID-19 never had symptoms, then they are considered contagious starting 48 hours before their test that confirmed they have COVID-19 until 10 days after the date of that test.

2. I tested positive for COVID-19 and was told to self-isolate, but I need to work. What can I do?

If you are able to **telework**, you should speak with your employer and find out if this is an option. If you cannot telework, you may be entitled to paid leave benefits.

If you have earned any San Francisco or California **paid sick leave**, you can use that to cover your time away from work. You can also use your paid sick leave if you have been placed under quarantine or to

care for a family member who has been directed to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19.

- In California, most employers are required to provide paid sick leave benefits. Check with your employer to see how many hours you have accrued.

If you have used up all your sick leave, you may be able to take other leave days such as **vacation or paid time off**. It is best to check with your supervisor to see what is allowed.

3. Can I lose my job or have my hours cut if I am sick and cannot go to work?

The State of California has [many laws that protect you from retaliation and discrimination](#). If you feel you have been discriminated against, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) can help you file a complaint by calling 1-800-669-4000 or visiting their website at www.eeoc.gov/. In addition:

- California [Department of Fair Employment and Housing has COVID=19 fact sheets for employees](#).
- The San Francisco [Stay Safer at Home Health Order](#) prohibits businesses from taking any adverse action against any worker for staying home if they have to isolate or quarantine for any of the reasons listed in question #1.

4. What kinds of sick leave are available to me?

- The San Francisco [Paid Sick Leave Ordinance \(SF PSLO\)](#) mandates that all SF employers provide paid sick leave to their employees. Employers are required to list the number of paid sick leave hours available to each employee on their paychecks.
- San Francisco's Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement list of [laws, guidance and resources for employees during COVID-19](#) includes information on Paid Sick Leave.

5. I or a family member have COVID-19 and have to miss work. I have used all my paid sick leave or don't have any paid sick leave. What other financial help is available to me while I can't work?

The [California Employment Development Department \(EDD\) has numerous programs](#) for people and businesses who have lost their jobs, had their hours reduced or are unable to work due to COVID-19.

- Apply online at www.edd.ca.gov for **State Disability Insurance (SDI)**. A healthcare provider or local health official will need to certify your application.
- **Paid Family Leave** is available if you need to take time off from work to care for a seriously sick family member (parent, parent in-law, child, spouse, domestic partner, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild). It is usually 60% or 70% of your pay for up to 6 weeks. Your employer may require that you use up to two weeks of vacation leave or paid time off before you can get Paid Family Leave benefits. The benefits can start immediately after your vacation leave/PTO ends. Your family member's health condition would need to be certified by a health care provider. You can make a claim at www.edd.ca.gov/claims.htm.

You may qualify for **workers' compensation benefits**. For more information visit the [Department of Industrial Relations COVID-19 page](#).

If you work in the food sector (including a bar/restaurant, grocery store, food preparation facility, food delivery service, or transportation company) and your employer has more than 500 employees, you are entitled to an additional 80 hours of paid leave from your employer through [California's COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave law](#).

6. I or my family member have COVID-19, but I feel fine and I need to keep working. Can't I just go to work as usual but wear a mask?

Vaccinated employees who have no COVID-19 symptoms can continue to work. If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have COVID-19 symptoms you cannot keep working. Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](#) to isolate. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers. Returning to work before this time could lead to more people getting sick.

7. If I am laid off or asked to work fewer hours due to coronavirus, what resources would help me?

Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits could be available for you. You can file a claim with the California Employment Development Department at www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/ to receive unemployment benefits.

If you are a shift worker and report for work but are sent home early due to business being slow, you might be able to get part-time pay under [California's Reporting Time Pay](#) requirements. However, this does not apply if your workplace has been told to close by government authorities.

8. Will my employer be informed if I test positive for COVID-19 or have had close contact with someone with COVID-19?

The San Francisco Department of Health will contact your workplace if you voluntarily provide your workplace location and indicate that you may have been contagious while you were at work or exposed at the workplace. Providing this information helps health authorities enable your employer to assess other potential exposures to COVID-19 among your co-workers. If necessary, your name would be disclosed to your supervisor or your human relations department, however, your name would not be disclosed to your co-workers.

9. If I or someone I know is an undocumented worker, what resources can I look at?

Undocumented workers are eligible for many State and San Francisco laws and programs, including San Francisco and California paid sick leave, San Francisco Public Health Emergency Leave, Disability Insurance, Paid Family Leave, and Workers' Compensation (details in Questions #3 and #4).

Undocumented workers are not eligible for State Unemployment Insurance.

- The City and County of San Francisco has more resources for undocumented workers at the [Help for Immigrants During Coronavirus](#) webpage.
- Techqueria is a fund for undocumented workers. You can get financial help if you are an undocumented immigrant in the Bay Area at lp.techqueria.org/tq-covid-fund.
- The Office of Employment and Workforce Development [Right to Recover program](#) guarantees two weeks of minimum wage replacement, or \$1285, to any worker who lives in San Francisco who tests positive for COVID-19 at a City testing site or hospital. Once a person tests positive, they will get a call from the Department of Public Health. They will be asked if they need financial assistance in order to safely quarantine. If they say yes, they will get a follow up call from a community group who will help to get a check sent to them. The worker can call the Worker Information Line at 415-701-4817 if they missed the initial phone call and would like to request assistance.

10. What resources do Self-employed / Independent Contractors / "Gig Workers" have?

The [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance \(PUA\)](#) program provides unemployment benefits for self-

employed adults and independent contractors who normally can't get Unemployment Insurance.

You still might qualify for regular Unemployment Insurance, State Disability Insurance, or Paid Family Leave if you were misclassified or if you worked as an employee before becoming self-employed. You may need to submit a misclassification claim at the same time as you submit your unemployment insurance claim. Find more information here: www.labor.ca.gov/employmentstatus/workers/#rights.

11. Do I need a note for work?

The San Francisco Department of Public Health has encouraged employers not to require a note for employees to stay home from work or return to work. This information can be found on our website at: www.sfgdcp.org/rtw. In addition, employers may not require a doctor's note for employees taking San Francisco paid sick leave or Public Health Emergency Leave.

12. Do I need a negative COVID-19 test to return to work?

Once you have completed the required period of self-isolation or quarantine and are not considered contagious, you may return to work. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the San Francisco Department of Public Health, employers should not request that employees who were diagnosed with COVID-19 provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test.

In some healthcare settings, testing may be required before you can return to work. Check to see if your employer has additional policies and procedures if you have been in self-isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19. For specific guidance, please see [Long Term and Senior Care section at sfcdcp.org/covid19hcp](http://www.sfgdcp.org/covid19hcp).

13. If I am fully vaccinated, do I need to quarantine?

If you are [fully vaccinated](#) against COVID-19 and are asymptomatic and have had close contact with somebody with Confirmed COVID-19, you do not have to quarantine or miss work. You should self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after exposure. If you experience symptoms you should isolate, get tested and inform your healthcare provider. If you have had close contact with a person with Confirmed COVID-19 and live or work in a high-density workplace (like congregate housing, or a dormitory) you should get tested. Please read more about whether you need to quarantine at [sfcdcp.org/quarantineaftervaccination](http://www.sfgdcp.org/quarantineaftervaccination).

- The vaccine is one of the most important ways to end the pandemic. The FDA, CDC, and California's own Scientific Safety Review Workgroup have reviewed data from clinical trials to ensure the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines. We strongly encourage all eligible persons to get vaccinated. Find out more about the vaccine, including where and when to get it at sf.gov/covidvax

14. I'm feeling overwhelmed by all the different programs. Can someone help me understand?

The San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development can help you get answers – they can be reached at their website www.oewd.org/employees-impacted-covid-19, phone 415-701-4817, or email workforce.connection@sfgov.org.

Resources

Local:

- [Help for immigrants during coronavirus](#)
- Guidances about Returning to Work after confirmed or suspected COVID-19: sfdcpc.org/rtw
- Isolation and Quarantine Information: sfdcpc.org/i&q
- [San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development COVID-19 page](#)
- [San Francisco Office of Labor Standards Enforcement](#)

State:

- [FAQs on Laws Enforced by the California Labor Commissioner's Office](#)
- [Healthy Workplace Healthy Family Act of 2014 \(AB 1522\)](#)
- [Paid Family Leave, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, SDI Online and Unemployment Insurance](#)
- [Department of Fair Employment and Housing has COVID=19 fact sheets for employees.](#)
- [California Labor and Workforce Development Agency Worker Resources](#)