

COVID-19 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

COVID-19 Commonly Asked Questions from Chenango County residents Part 1

This is a rapidly evolving situation and information is subject to change.

What is a CONFIRMED CASE?

An individual is a confirmed case when they are tested positive for the virus. The person is presumed to be infectious. A case investigation begins in order to determine others who may have been exposed. The individual remains in ISOLATION (away from all others) until a medical professional releases them on a specific date, and they are no longer deemed contagious. For the general public, a positive case brings awareness that the virus is present in the community, but does not mean that everyone is at risk of exposure. Sharing location of positive cases does not change what the general public should do: Stay home, adhere to social distancing, and wash hands well and often. A confirmed positive case cannot report to work until they are released from home isolation by the local health department.

What is a CONTACT INVESTIGATION or CONTACT TRACING?

An investigation is the process of identifying anyone who may have come into contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19. The positive person is interviewed by a public health nurse about places they have been, and asked to list people who may have been in close contact. A close contact is within 6 feet of someone for a long period of time or direct contact with secretions via cough, sneeze, or speaking. The contacts are notified that they may have been exposed. *To protect the privacy of the individual, the Health Department cannot release identifying information.* The contacts of the positive individual will be contacted by a public health nurse as part of the contact investigation. A contact to a contact (such as family members) is not a case and is not quarantined.

What is MANDATORY QUARANTINE?

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. A quarantine order comes from a person's local health department as part of an investigation.

Mandatory Quarantine is required and directed by the local health department by a quarantine court order. This is required for the following persons:

- ✓ Persons who tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19 by a clinical test, regardless if they are symptomatic or not. Positive patients also go under home isolation
- ✓ Persons who had direct contact (within 6 feet for more than 10 minutes) with a confirmed positive case
- ✓ Persons who traveled to a highly affected area and have returned to NYS (see Travel Advisory for details at www.coronavirus.health.ny.gov because this changes and updates on a daily basis)
- ✓ Any other person whose healthcare provider and local health department believe should be quarantined

What is ISOLATION?

Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick. People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific "sick room" or area and using a separate bathroom (if available). Someone needs to isolate if they have symptoms of COVID-19 and are able to recover at home or if they have tested positive for the virus. There are specific NYS guidelines for individuals to discontinue home isolation. Guidance can change, so it is important to keep up to date on recent changes and check with the local health department.

What is AN ESSENTIAL BUSINESS?

A business can be deemed or designated as essential by NYS Department of Health if it provides an essential service, such as manufacturing. The business must apply for this designation and follow guidance provided to them (such as cleaning, disinfecting and others) in order to operate at this time.

Who can RETURN TO WORK under Essential Business status?

It is up to the employer to decide who is an essential employee. This may effect when certain employees are allowed to return to work and others may not. Employees that test positive for the virus are NOT allowed to work until their isolation period is over, as determined by the local health department. Other Quarantined employees might be allowed to go to work if they are essential, as long as they are not displaying any symptoms or signs of illness, and NYSDOH Guidelines are maintained. The employer can decide if extra precautions should be taken by the employee while at work or if they want people to remain at home while awaiting a test or test result.