

**☑ Talking Points**

July 31, 2020

*This message is for all Bozeman Health employees from Incident Command.*

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**Employee Testing and Return to Work Guidelines****Here's what's you need to know...**

Our number one priority throughout Bozeman Health's COVID-19 pandemic response is the safety and well-being of employees, patients, residents, and our community. While employee surveillance testing logistics and information is still being finalized, last week we did start surveillance testing at Hillcrest Senior Living for those employees and residents.

With the Hillcrest surveillance testing and with the upcoming surveillance employee testing, it is not our intention to communicate to the organization when an employee or resident tests positive, unless it is a matter of public health determined by the Gallatin City-County Health Department (GCCHD). Employee and resident privacy and confidentiality remains in place and information is shared on a need-to-know basis only.

When an individual tests positive for COVID-19, there is a defined process that is followed to account for any and all interactions that person may have had with others. It is the role and responsibility of our partners at Gallatin City-County Health Department to contact individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and conduct contact tracing. If/when an employee or resident tests positive for COVID-19, individuals who are considered as a high-risk exposure to that employee or resident who tested positive are contacted by GCCHD. GCCHD informs them that they have had recent exposure to an individual confirmed positive for COVID-19 and provides information to them on what they should do for the next two weeks. Should you become aware of an individual or resident that tests positive, there is nothing you need to do unless you are contacted by GCCHD. No news is typically good news.

Subsequently, the Bozeman Health Employee Health team is notified of any employees who test positive and conducts an investigation to determine which work groups/teams and/or patients may have had a high-risk exposure to an individual who tests positive for COVID-19. They work collaboratively with GCCHD to inform those individuals.

There is also a defined process for when employees can return to work. When an individual tests positive for COVID-19, their situation is evaluated by communicable disease specialists at the Gallatin City-County Health Department. They are instructed to isolate for a specified period of time, which is usually 10 days following when symptoms first start. Pending other health or situation considerations, that individual would be cleared to return to work by the appropriate Employee Health and Gallatin City-County Health Department personnel. If the individual has recovered, and then tests positive again, scientific evidence supports that the individual is **no longer infectious** which means **they are not contagious**. Tests for COVID-19 are extremely sensitive and can detect minute traces of virus and non-viable viral particles (RNA fragments). We expect a percentage of recovered individuals to continue to test positive for weeks following their illness, however, these individuals do not transmit the virus to others.

We would not permit an employee to return to work if it was not safe for them to do so. Our return to work guidelines can be found on MIND [here](#) (policy), along with a return to work [flow chart](#) and [FAQs](#).

**Questions or comments?** Contact Michelle Kirsch at 406-414-5558 or [mkirsch@bozemanhealth.org](mailto:mkirsch@bozemanhealth.org).