Health Department

Multnomah County Health Department

Office of the Health Officer

July 10, 2020

RE: Workplace testing for COVID-19

Dear Employer:

As the local public health authority, we would like to clarify expectations of businesses for COVID-19 testing of employees:

At this time, **we do not endorse requiring proof of negative COVID-19 test results as a condition of reopening or returning to work** following illness because testing capacity remains limited.

> Local public health works directly with individuals who are positive and uses a time-based approach for when they may safely return to work. The only exception to this recommendation applies to employees of long-term care facilities.

If there are at least *two* cases related to your worksite public health may determine that other staff require testing.

For the sake of your business and employees, please make sure you have a plan for testing your staff. The plan may include having insured staff go to their usual source of health care or contracting with health systems for testing.

If you contract for or provide direct testing to employees, you must ensure:

- Employees are notified of results promptly, whether negative or positive, and
- Employees with positive test results receive education from a medically-trained individual. This education should include what medical care to seek based on symptoms, how long to isolate themselves and how to otherwise protect their families and household members.

Please the see the next page for more information. Thank you for your partnership.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Vines, MD, MPH
Multnomah County Health Officer

Ways to protect your workplace from COVID-19 infection:

- Screen employees for symptoms of COVID-19 at the beginning of each shift (e.g., asking if an employee has had cough, fever, shortness of breath, or is otherwise feeling unwell).
- Encourage employees to stay home when ill and provide leave policies that allow for this. Stopping the transmission of COVID-19 is key to stopping outbreaks. Fourteen days paid leave for all *suspected* or *confirmed* cases will shorten the outbreak, be cost effective, and prevent illness and deaths in the long run.
- Require employees to wear masks or face coverings and to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from others.
- Encourage frequent handwashing.
- Disinfect the workplace frequently.
- Make arrangements for spaces for employees to eat and staggered schedules so that there is plenty of space while people are eating (masks off).

What else employers should know about outbreak response at work sites:

- You will need to provide local public health with a line list of names/dates of birth of individuals tested, test results, and phone numbers for those who test positive. This information can be shared with us without a medical release under existing Oregon public health statutes. Public health statutes include strict privacy controls.

- The Oregon Health Authority will release the name of your work site on its web site if you employ more than 30 people and have at least 5 or more cases. If the media asks for more information, we share minimal details and will work directly with you if media interest is high.