

CDC Now Provides Two Options for Shortened Quarantine Time

Labor & Employment Law Update

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In a press conference held on December 2, 2020, the CDC announced their anticipated endorsement of a shortened quarantine time. Individuals without symptoms may end quarantine after seven (7) days, followed by a negative test result. Alternatively, and as a second option, individuals without symptoms may also end quarantine after ten (10) days without the need for a negative test. In regard to the seven (7) day option, a PCR or rapid test is acceptable and should be taken within 48 hours of the end of the quarantine period. Until now, the CDC has recommended a 14-day quarantine period following a potential exposure. Additionally, it's important to note that the rules for dealing with recommended isolation periods (i.e., situations where an individual exhibits symptoms) remain unchanged.

This shortened time has been endorsed as a result of studies which found the median incubation period for COVID-19 to be five (5) days. In some cases, individuals have developed symptoms as late as two (2) weeks after exposure. However, the risk of someone leaving quarantine earlier than 14 days after exposure and transmitting the virus to someone else in the event they later become ill is small enough that the duration of the recommended quarantine time can safely be reduced. Because that small risk still exists, the CDC will continue to recommend a 14-day quarantine period when possible as that is the surest way to curb transmissions.

Officials at the CDC hope that a reduced period of recommended quarantine time will increase voluntary compliance as well as reduce the economic impact on businesses. With the winter months forecasted to hold increased community transmission and COVID-19 related deaths, updating the recommendations for quarantine to address these concerns in a safe manner is critical.