

COVID IN THE COURTHOUSE: *Your Response*

Local Health Department Is in Charge. The response to a COVID-19 exposure in the Courthouse or related facilities should be dictated by direction from your local public health department; notify it immediately of any exposure, and ask for direction on how to proceed. It is *highly unlikely* that you will be required to shut down your building.

Isolate / Remove the Symptomatic Individual. Immediately ensure the symptomatic or COVID-positive person is properly wearing a face mask. Separate that individual from other staff or members of the public.

1. Obtain that individual's contact information, including cell phone number.
2. Instruct the individual to leave the facility without encountering any other staff or members of the public. If that is not immediately possible, instruct the individual to move to and remain in an unoccupied room until a clear path for exit can be established.
3. Establish telephone contact with the individual to collect information. If telephone contact is not possible, ensure appropriate physical distancing from the individual before commencing information collection.

Collect Information. To make sure you provide the local public health department with adequate information, collect the following information:

1. The days and times the COVID-positive person was in the building in the past 14 days and the locations where they were present.
2. The identity and contact information of individuals who had 15 minutes or more of contact with the COVID-positive person; also inquire whether they were masked and the physical distance between them.
3. Provide the information to the local public health department and await further direction. Follow your local public health department's guidance on quarantine requirements for persons in close contact with the COVID-positive person.

Clean the Premises. Clean and disinfect all areas used by the COVID-positive person. (See <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>.)

Messaging. Consider the importance of public messaging of the occurrence.

- If the public learns of the incident from a different source, it may diminish your credibility in the eye of the public. Especially if the COVID-positive person was in a public space, consider a press release describing, in general terms (see below), the incident and the areas affected.
- In releasing information concerning the COVID-positive person's presence in the courthouse, you must be sensitive to the affected person's privacy. The best approach is to release only the information that the affected person agrees with. Some alternatives to consider:
 - Identifying the dates the person was on the premises, only identifying the location if it will not implicitly identify the COVID-positive person (i.e., identifying "attorney in this courtroom on this date" may allow others to identify that person). The downside of this type of general, nonspecific notification is that it leads to anxiety about contacts by persons who were actually nowhere near the COVID-positive person, and it fosters speculation.
 - Identifying the dates and locations affected, even if the detail is sufficient to identify to some people the identity of the COVID-positive person. This is an approach that balances the public's need to know and the individual's privacy (those familiar with the building may figure out the identity from the dates and location, but the general public won't know). Make sure the affected person consents.

For local health department contact information, visit:

http://www.idph.state.il.us/IDPHPrograms/v_LHDDirectory/Show-V-LHDDirectory-Public.aspx