



COVID-19 & Social Assistance Workers: Preparing for Visits with Your Clients
March 17, 2020

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a newly identified coronavirus. It has spread throughout much of the world, including to the United States.

Most social assistance workers have a medium exposure risk to COVID-19 due to the nature of their work. Jobs with medium exposure risk include those that require frequent or close contact with (i.e., within six feet of) people who may be infected with SARS-CoV-2, but who are not known or suspected COVID-19 patients. Social assistance workers are at risk for exposure to COVID-19 when they have frequent contact with clients who may have returned from international locations with widespread COVID-19 transmission. Social assistance workers are also at risk for exposure when they have contact with the general public and clients (e.g., in schools, high-population-density work environments, healthcare and social service agencies, homeless encampments, and during home visits).

To reduce the impact of COVID-19 outbreak conditions on businesses, workers and the public, it is important for all employers to plan now for COVID-19. One step a social assistance employer can take to slow the spread of COVID-19 is to implement pre-screening questions for the clients to be served before workers enter a client's home or during in-house appointments. If clients report that they are symptomatic (fever, difficulty breathing or fever above 100 degrees) or if they answer yes to any of the following questions, the risk for exposure to COVID-19 is elevated and workers may need to use personal protective equipment to prevent exposure when meeting with clients.¹

¹ Employers should select appropriate PPE and provide it to social assistance workers in accordance with OSHA PPE standards. Social assistance workers must receive training on and demonstrate an understanding of:

- When to use PPE.
- Which PPE is necessary.
- How to properly don, use and doff PPE in a manner to prevent self-contamination.
- How to properly dispose of or disinfect and maintain PPE.
- The limitations of PPE.

Any reusable PPE must be properly cleaned, decontaminated and maintained after and between uses. Employers should have policies and procedures describing a recommended sequence for safely donning and doffing PPE.

Pre-Screening Questions

1. Have you traveled to any of these locations in the last 14 days?²

- China
- Iran
- South Korea
- Italy
- Japan

2. Have you had contact with anyone with confirmed COVID-19 in the last 14 days?

3. Have you had any of these symptoms in the last 14 days?

- Fever greater than 100
- Difficulty breathing
- Cough

4. Are you currently experiencing fever over 100, difficulty breathing or cough?

If clients answer yes to questions 1, 2 or both, recommend that they call their primary care provider or their State Department of Health for further direction.

Individuals should not visit a medical facility unless severely ill. Clients should call ahead and let any medical facility know why they are coming. They should not get close to anyone with a compromised immune system or other underlying condition (heart disease, diabetes, lung disease).

If clients answer no to questions 1 and 2, but yes to numbers 3 or 4, they should contact their healthcare provider if symptoms are severe.

² The list of geographic locations may change to include countries, and even locations in the US, where there has been sustained community transmission. It is important to stay updated as locations may need to be added to the list in the future.