



February 16, 2022

COVID-19 FAQs Around Health Screenings & Face Coverings

**Question: *Why do I have to complete a daily health screening questionnaire?***

**Answer:** The California Department of Public Health has issued [guidance for office workspaces](#) to “support a safe, clean environment for employees”. Their guidance calls for employers to “provide temperature and/or symptom screenings for all workers at the beginning of their shift and any vendors, contractors, or other workers entering the establishment.” The daily health screening questionnaires are required for all County departments and facilities. The County will continue to follow the State’s COVID-19 safety guidelines. The County is also requiring all business with offices in our county to comply with these same guidelines.

**Question: *If I complete my daily health questionnaire from home, is that time compensable?***

**Answer:** No, pre-shift time spent on health checks is not compensable since it is not a principal activity of your job. The questionnaire should only take seconds to complete.

**Question: *Are my responses to the daily health screening questionnaire protected by HIPAA?***

**Answer:** The County treats this information as confidential and will protect your personal privacy; however, it is not HIPAA protected Personal Health Information (PHI). Our screening results will only be shared with select individuals who have a need to know in order to ensure employees experiencing COVID related symptoms are not reporting to work and are connected with Public Health for further instruction and clearance to return to work. Screenings that reveal symptoms (one or more Yes answers) will be shared with the Public Health Department. They will be maintained separate from your personnel file. Screenings that reveal no symptoms (all No answers) will be deleted or shredded.

**Question: *What happens if I answer “yes” to any of the symptoms in the health screening questionnaire?***

**Answer:** If you answer yes to any of the COVID symptoms and cannot attribute them to another condition (e.g. coughing because of allergies) please stay home and notify your supervisor. You must also contact Public Health (PH) at 805-781-5500 and inform them you are a County employee experiencing symptoms associated with COVID and need to speak

the Communicable Diseases team for further direction. You may only return to work once you have been given clearance by PH.

Employees who call in sick and do not report to work due to COVID related symptoms should still notify PH. They must either complete the questionnaire or call PH and identify that they are a County employee with symptoms. This will facilitate getting cleared to return to work.

**Question: *Am I required to wear a face covering to work?***

**Answer:** The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Officer [announced](#) that starting February 16, 2022 face coverings are no longer required for vaccinated individuals indoors.

Face coverings\* are required for unvaccinated individuals in indoor public settings and businesses.

Face coverings are also required for all individuals in the following settings, regardless of vaccination status:

- Public transit
- Indoors in K-12 schools, childcare
- Healthcare settings
- Correctional facilities and detention centers
- Homeless shelters
- Long term care settings and senior care facilities

\*Per the Cal OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS), a face covering means a surgical mask, a medical procedure mask, a respirator worn voluntarily, or a tightly woven fabric or non-woven material of at least two layers (i.e., fabrics that do not let light pass through when held up to a light source) that completely covers the nose and mouth and is secured to the head with ties, ear loops, or elastic bands that go behind the head. If gaiters are worn, they shall have two layers of fabric or be folded to make two layers. A face covering is a solid piece of material without slits, visible holes, or punctures, and must fit snugly over the nose, mouth, and chin with no large gaps on the outside of the face. A face covering does not include a scarf, ski mask, balaclava, bandana, turtleneck, collar, or single layer of fabric.

**Question: *I have a medical condition that prevents me from being able to wear a face covering, what should I do?***

**Answer:** If you have a medical condition that prevents you from wearing a face covering, please inform your supervisor and provide them with your doctor's note. The doctor's note

does not need to provide the diagnosis or even the symptoms, just a confirmation of the need for an exclusion from the cloth mask requirement. This is similar to what employees are required to provide to their employers as part of Americans with Disabilities Act and is not in violation of any of privacy laws.

If your job requires you to have regular contact with others, you will be required to wear a non-restrictive alternative such as a face shield in the same situations that calls for a face covering. The County will supply the shield in those instances. You may not use a face shield in the place of a face covering without a documented medical condition, as a face shield is less effective than a mask in protecting those around you.

Cloth face covering provide greater protection than face shields; therefore, a face shield is not an alternative unless you are exempt from wearing a cloth face covering.

**Question: *What if a customer refuses to wear a face covering?***

**Answer:** Businesses have a right to require masks and to refuse entry or service to an individual who is not wearing a mask. It is akin to banning smoking inside of a store - people have a right to smoke, but a business can restrict that right on its premises for the safety and peace of mind of its employees and other customers. However, enforcing the right to require a face covering may be more challenging. Refusing service to a patron for not wearing a face covering could elevate other safety risks, including violence.

Suggested guidelines (please follow your department's protocols if they differ):

- 1) Ask them if they forgot their mask. Well-intentioned people are still trying to develop good habits.
- 2) Offer a disposable mask if they don't have one.
- 3) If they refuse, ask them if they could possibly do the transaction online.
- 4) Still refuse? Speak with the customer behind plexiglass and/or place additional distance between yourself and the customer.
- 5) If the customer is threatening or belligerent, follow your department's protocol for removing such customers. Feel free to reach out to Risk Management at (805) 781-1346 if you need assistance with a Reception Desk Protocol.

**Question: *Are Vulnerable Populations returning to the workplace?***

**Answer:** Please continue to accommodate high-risk/vulnerable workers. This includes people 65 and older or with a medical condition that make them more susceptible to infection or at risk of serious health risks if they are infected. While they may return to the workplace, we would prefer that they continue to shelter in place in order to protect

themselves. Some departments are also seeking to protect them by altering their role or work setting. Please work with your HR Analyst to discuss accommodation questions or concerns.

**Question: *If an employee is vulnerable due to a medical condition, will they be required to provide evidence of their medical condition to seek an alternative to reporting to their workplace?***

**Answer:** Yes

#### Vaccination Status Self-Attestation FAQs

**Question: *Why is the County requiring employees to self-attest that they are fully vaccinated prior to allowing them to forgo wearing a mask in the workplace?***

**Answer:** It is required by Cal OSHA's revised Emergency Temporary Standards that govern COVID safety requirements in California workplaces that the employer document the vaccination status of employees who wish not to wear a mask.

**Question: *How will I know which of my employees have completed their self-attestation?***

**Answer:** If an employee is not wearing a mask, assume they have self-attested that they are fully vaccinated or have an approved medical exemption.

**Question: *If my employees already completed the attestation form, do they need to complete it again?***

**Answer:** No. Only employees that have not yet attested to their vaccination status are required to complete the form before removing their mask indoors.

**Question: *Will I need to ask my employees for proof of vaccination if I see them without a mask?***

**Answer:** No. We reserve the right to, but we do not intend to require employees to provide proof of vaccination.

**Question: *What do I do if one of my employees raises a concern about the vaccination status of another employee not wearing a mask?***

**Answer:** Instruct them to assume that if they are not wearing a mask, they have been vaccinated or have another legitimate reason for not wearing it (ex: medical exemption).

Encourage employees who feel at risk to consider wearing a mask or respirator (N95). They may request a respirator by contacting their [departmental safety representative](#).

If you believe there is a bone fide compliance concern, please contact Human Resources.

**Question: *Is the County allowed to ask employees if they are vaccinated?***

**Answer:** [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) and [Department of Fair Employment and Housing](#) laws allow employers to require employees to provide documentation or other confirmation of vaccination. However, this information, like all medical information, must be kept confidential and stored separately from the employee's personnel files under the American Disabilities Act. Records of the County's Self-Attestation form will be kept confidential by Human Resources.

**Question: *What if my employee declines to complete the form because they do not want to share their vaccination status?***

**Answer:** Under the ETS, an employee has the right to decline to state if they are vaccinated or not. In that case, the employer must treat the employee as unvaccinated, and the employee is expected to wear a mask unless they have an approved exemption.

**Question: *Can an employee who has had COVID refrain from wearing a mask if they are not vaccinated and/or have not completed the attestation form?***

**Answer:** No.