Returning to Work after Testing Positive for COVID-19

If you have tested positive for COVID in the past and are wondering when it would be an appropriate time to return to work, the CDC recommends employees working in a non-healthcare setting follow a **symptoms-based approach rather than asking for a healthcare provider's note**. There are several reasons for this, including:

1. There is a resource strain on healthcare providers, meaning they are already extremely busy and may not be able to provide official documentation in a timely manner.
2. An individual who doesn't show any symptoms of COVID-19 can still have SARS-CoV-2 RNA in their respiratory tract for up to 3 months after a COVID-19 diagnosis, meaning that, even though they're recovered, they would present a positive test.
3. An individual who previously presented symptoms of COVID-19 is not recommended to retest within 3 months of the onset of their initial symptoms.

As outlined by the CDC, a **symptoms-based approach** recommends that those experiencing symptomatic COVID-19 illness may discontinue isolation after 10 days of symptom onset and lack of fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication. For cases of asymptomatic COVID-19 infection, the CDC outlines that isolation may cease after 10 days after the first positive COVID-19 test result.

For any additional work-related concerns or questions, please consult these websites.

1. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/testing-non-healthcare-workplaces.html
2. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fstrategy-discontinue-isolation.html
3. https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf

Health Justice Project

Loyola University Chicago School of Law
Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy
https://www.mlpillinois.org/cercl-covid19-resources