

COVID-19 Guidance

Expedited Return to Work

Frequently Asked Questions

What is AHS doing in terms of expediting staff back to work?

AHS is already experiencing some staffing challenges, due to staff members self-isolating, or having to take time off to look after children and loved ones.

This was anticipated as we respond to the COVID-19 global pandemic, however it is placing strain on some areas of the healthcare system.

We are aware of a number of frontline staff members who are currently self-isolating after returning to the country from abroad. In many cases, these staff members are not ill and are not displaying any symptoms.

In some cases, not having these asymptomatic staff members at work may mean that some critical healthcare services cannot be provided. Their role may be critical, and there may be no other alternatives available for coverage.

If possible, and if safe, we would like these essential frontline staff members to return to work before the required 14-day self-isolation period is over.

This step will ONLY be taken if it is safe for both patients, and staff. If a staff member is at all symptomatic, they will NOT be allowed to return to work until cleared following their 14-day self-isolation period.

Who is eligible?

Expediting the return to work process is applicable in any acute care or continuing care setting in which AHS staff, contracted staff, or medical staff are providing essential services to the public.

Anyone being considered for an expedited return to work must not be symptomatic.

The approval process is the same regardless of the exposure that led to the asymptomatic person being required to self-isolate.

What is AHS doing to ensure patients and staff are not put at risk?

Any staff who are approved for an expedited return to work will be required to follow strict conditions, including:

- Donning a procedural mask at all times;
- Practicing social distancing where possible;
- Staying six feet from other people while eating;
- Monitoring any change in symptoms, including having their temperature checked before each shift and completing a symptom checklist daily;
- And, closely following all Infection Prevention and Control protocols as well as other steps to ensure the safety of patients, families and other staff.

Managers are responsible for monitoring compliance with the staff member's conditions of return.

Managers and staff are also required to immediately notify their Zone Emergency Operation Centre (ZEOC) if the conditions of return are not followed.

How are expedited returns to work being approved?

Expedited returns to work are only being approved case-by-case, as required, through the Zone Emergency Operation Centre (ZEOC).

The request is initiated by a manager, and not by the staff themselves, and requires a completed Return to Work Approval form.

It will only be approved if the staff member is deemed critical to healthcare operations and is completely asymptomatic.

How do I know this won't compromise my safety?

AHS has developed the expedited approval process to ensure that all factors are considered prior to approving a staff's return to work from self-isolation. Patient and staff safety will be the deciding factor in any approval.

AHS will always err on the side of patient and staff safety.