



Safe Return to Business Series

# Balancing your on-site needs and employee accommodations

06/18/2020



# Legal Disclosure:

The Coronavirus pandemic is an ongoing, continuously evolving situation.

Northern Light Health (NLH) encourages everyone to follow federal and state governmental guidance and mandates.

NLH does not know the particulars of your situation, so the information presented today is general in nature and is based upon NLH's own experience, which may or may not apply in your specific situation, and which may be revised as we learn more about the Coronavirus.

Accordingly, following any guidance NLH presents today in no way guarantees that you, your employees and/or your customers and clients will not contract or spread the Coronavirus.

In regard to employment, every situation is unique, and must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure compliance with the law.

The information presented should not be taken as legal advice and you will need to retain your own counsel to review specific questions regarding employment situations and/or accommodations in your organization.

# Balancing your on-site needs and employee accommodations

## Today's Topics:

Medical Accommodations – What are my responsibilities as an employer?

When does COVID become a work-related exposure?

When is it safe for my staff to return to work post-exposure?

Strategies for handling employee anxiety



Ed Gilkey, MD  
Senior Physician  
Executive  
Northern Light  
Beacon Health



Paul Bolin, MBA  
SVP, Chief Human  
Resources Officer  
Northern Light  
Health



Howard Jones, MD  
Medical Director  
Northern Light  
Work Health



Angela Fileccia, LCSW  
Manager Healthy Life  
Resource Program  
Northern Light Acadia



Jim Jarvis, MD,  
FAAFP  
Medical Director,  
Clinical Education  
Northern Light  
EMMC  
COVID Response  
Incident  
Commander



# Medical Accommodations

What are my responsibilities as an employer?

# How to prioritize the safety of your employees and customers



- Masking saves lives and protects others
- If an employee can't mask may not be able to work in close proximity to others

# Applying, ADA Reasonable Accommodation Interactive Process



- Remote work
- Different workspace configuration
- Leave of absence
- And more



# When to consider leave of absence



- Employee with a serious health condition
- Employee medically at high risk to be near others
- If not sure consult an attorney





# How to listen for concern



## Key Phrases

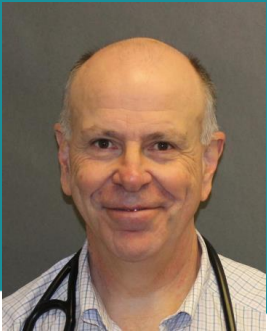
- Is employee asking for a reasonable accommodation?
- Ask for clarity
- Are they nervous?
- Share your safety details
  - Masking
  - Physical distancing
  - Cleaning and hygiene



# When does COVID become a work related exposure?



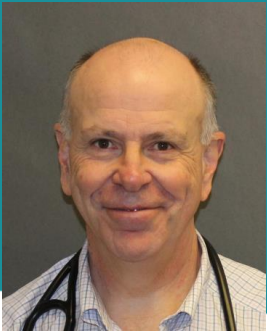
# OSHA guidance: Causality and COVID Infection



## Work Associated, Causality, and Recordability

- With a diagnosis using CDC criteria
- When there is no other reasonable explanation
- Community transmission and occupational risk are considered as part of the equation

# OSHA guidance: Work related condition



- Several cases among employees who work in close proximity
  - No alternative explanation
- Contracted after close exposure to a customer or coworker
  - Person is confirmed COVID-19
  - No alternative explanation
- Job duties include frequent and close exposure to the general public
  - Location with ongoing community transmission
  - No alternative explanation

# OSHA guideline: Important reminders



- Recording a COVID-19 does not mean an OSHA standard was violated
- Respect privacy
- Investigate the exposure history
- Do not violate the employee's expectation of medical privacy

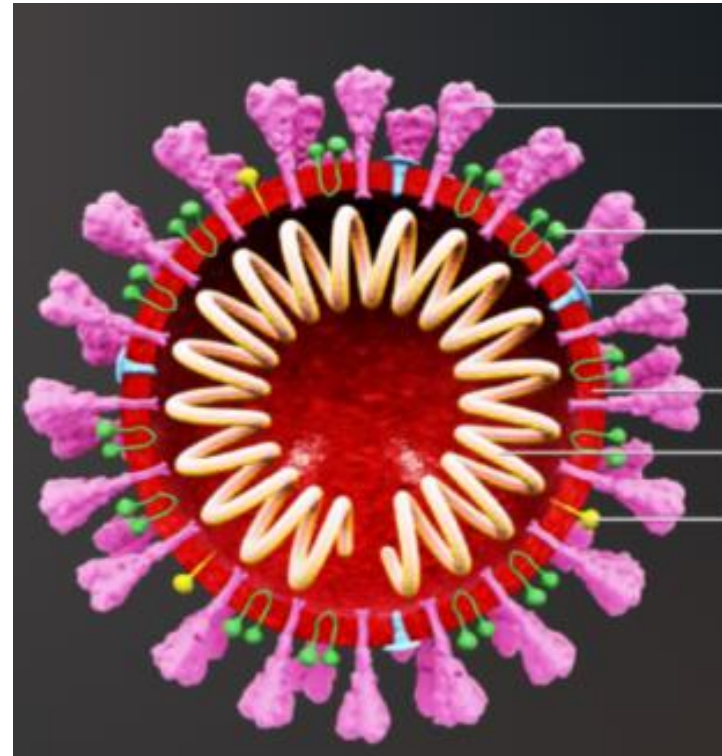
When is it safe for my employees to return to work post-exposure?



# COVID: Where knowledge meets emotion



- Basic biology is lacking
- Industries have different risks of transmission and outbreak
  - Meat processing
  - Congregate care facilities
- Consult an occupational medicine specialist
  - About the disease
  - About return to work



- Perception
- Political Spin
- Fake News
- Core News
- Core Science

# Returning the employee to work



- For an ill employee
  - Use ONLY PCR (polymerase chain reaction) testing
  - Antibody testing utility is unknown
- Testing and contact tracing are key public health strategies

- Strategies for Return to Work

### Time based = after diagnosis

1. 10 Days after diagnosis by first symptoms (or POS test if no symptoms,)
2. Improvement in respiratory symptoms
3. Three days no fever without fever meds

### Test based strategy

1. Two consecutive negative tests -24 hours apart
2. After the positive -problematic due to continued viral shed over time



# How to safely return to work



- Daily symptom screen
- Social distance - reduce exposure intensity
- Clean surfaces regularly - per CDC guidelines
- Face coverings
  - Employees
  - Customers
  - Control coughs
- Hand hygiene
- Ventilate - fresh air, HEPA filter exchanged air centrally thru HVAC
- Keep obviously ill employees and customers home
- Vaccinate against other illnesses like flu



**Screen ahead, save some time**

You can now pre-screen before you enter one of our facilities to save time. Just do the following:

1. Visit [covid.northernlighthealth.org/covidcheck](https://covid.northernlighthealth.org/covidcheck) on your smartphone.
2. Answer screening questions at home or in your car so you don't need to go through the questions in person when you arrive.
  - If you answer **NO** to all of the questions you will get a green screen. Just show it to the screener and have your temperature taken.
  - If you answer **YES** to any of the questions you will get a red screen and should not go to the entrance. Instead, please self-isolate at home and contact your primary care office or call the COVID-19 hotline at 844-489-1822.

No personal health information is captured, the web browser acts only as a calculator showing the results based on the answers you provide.

Easy Access to our Pre-screening Tool



Open the camera on your phone and point it at this QR code. Once the code is scanned, a pop up message will ask if you want to go to this website. Just click on that message to go straight to the site.

Want to save the site to your phone for easy access for future visits?

iPhone Users – While at the website, click on the box with an up arrow at the bottom of your screen. Pick the "Add to Home Screen" option.

Android Users – While at the website, click on the three dots at the top right of your screen. Pick the "Add to Home Screen" option.

# Strategies for handling employee anxiety:

Thriving in the unknown: How to take control of stress and anxiety in the workplace



# Intra-Covid Anxiety is Normal



## Anxiety: Normal, Expected, Predictable

- Protects from harm—keeps us ‘on our toes’
  - Is part of the Fight, Flight, or Freeze response to danger (& a pandemic *is* danger)
- Provides information
  - Lets us know what to focus on to maintain safety
- Provides a burst of energy and focus attention
  - Helps us get things done; ‘nervous energy’

vs

## Anxiety: Potentially Harmful

- The body can’t tell the difference between modern stress and a life threatening event—the same hormones are released with both
- Stress hormones (cortisol/adrenaline) can lead to increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, depression and anxiety
- Can lead to absenteeism, presentism, and low morale



The Big Idea:  
Anxiety is the **Normal** response to **Abnormal** events

# Signs and Symptoms of Stress and Anxiety



## Physical Signs

- Muscle tension, dizziness
- Nausea/bowel problems
- Frequent colds
- Increase heart rate, decrease sex drive



## Behavioral Signs

- Appetite changes
- Sleep changes
- Nervous habits (nail biting)



## Emotional Signs

- Moody/irritable
- Depressed/anxious
- Unable to relax
- Lonely/isolated



## Cognitive Signs

- Decreased memory, concentration
- Difficulty making decisions
- Worrying, negative thinking



The Big Idea:

Be on the look-out for these signs of stress and anxiety.

# Reducing Anxiety in a *Intra-Covid* World



1

## Normalize Anxious Response to COVID

- Fight, Flight, or Freeze (i.e. anxiety) is the normal, hardwired response to stressors—plan for that response

2

## Provide objective information on regular and frequent intervals

- “Feelings aren’t facts” –when stressed, “executive functioning” goes off-line

3

## Provide a sense of control

- Control over one’s environment and circumstance decreases anxiety
- Over-communicate with staff and gather input, questions, fears



The Big Idea:

Provide **objective information** and a **sense of control**

# Plan for Predictable Stress and Anxiety



## Hold an Informational Meeting

(Cameras on if remote)

### Set the stage:

- Leader provides **factual information** about return to workplace
- Offer **reassurance** about physical safety and health
- **Ask for staff's help** to plan for emotional/psychological safety and health
- **Normalize** stress, anxiety, and worry – share normal responses to stress
- **Collect** questions, concerns, worries, anxieties from staff – **don't respond on the spot!**
- **Acknowledge** concerns expressed



## Hold a Response Meeting

(Cameras on if remote)

### Set the stage:

- Provide any **factual update** you have on planning process
- **Go through list** of questions, concerns, worries and respond to each one objectively
- **Collect** additional questions, concerns, worries

**Repeat!**



### The Big Idea:

Provide **multiple opportunities** for staff to express **worries and concerns**

# Latest CDC Guidelines on Testing



# Testing Update



- Northern Light Health Testing Expansion
- State Testing Expansion
- Utility of Screening Tests –Recent Study



# New tools you can use each week:

<https://northernlighthealth.org/Resources/Safe-Return-to-Business>



## Thriving in the Unknown: Take Control of Stress and Anxiety in the Workplace

Stress, anxiety, and worry are all normal responses to abnormal events. Stress and anxiety protect us from harm, keeps us alert, and focuses attention. Too much stress and anxiety can lead to absenteeism, presentism, and low morale. There are ways to lead employees through these anxious times.

### Normalize Anxious Response to Crisis

- Stress, anxiety and worry are all hard-wired responses to crisis events.

### Learn Common Signs and Symptoms of Stress

- Physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive signs of stress are common
- Recognize these signs so you can connect your staff to emotional wellness resources

### Hold Objective, Informational Sessions Frequently

Stress and anxiety can overwhelm the brain and reduce the ability to process information. Communicating frequently during a crisis can help reduce anxiety. Gathering input from staff helps provide a sense of control.

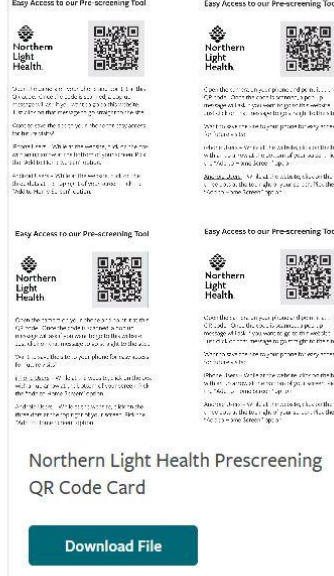
- Set the stage – provide as much factual information as you have
- Offer reassurance about physical safety and health
- Ask for staff's input and feedback and acknowledge concerns
- Normalize stress and anxiety – remember – stress and anxiety are the normal responses to abnormal events!
- Repeat this process frequently

### For More Information

Contact Angela Filecchia, MSW, LCSW  
Northern Light Acadia's Healthy Life Resources  
207.949.4634 or [afillecchia@northernlight.org](mailto:afillecchia@northernlight.org)

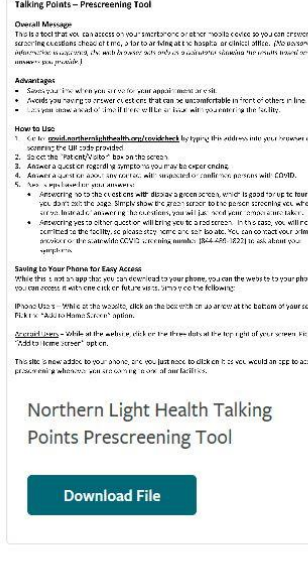
## Week 2 - Resources and Downloadables

Filter the results below by entering keywords into the search



Northern Light Health Prescreening QR Code Card

Download File



Northern Light Health Talking Points Prescreening Tool

Download File

**Questions:** Let our experiences help guide you  
Remember to use the chat function to ask questions.



Ed Gilkey, MD  
Senior Physician  
Executive  
Beacon Health



Paul Bolin, MBA  
SVP, Chief Human  
Resources Officer  
Northern Light Health



Howard Jones, MD  
Medical Director  
Northern Light  
Work Health



Angela Fileccia, LCSW  
Manager Healthy Life  
Resource Program  
Northern Light Acadia



Jim Jarvis, MD,  
FAAFP  
Medical Director,  
Clinical Education  
Northern Light  
EMMC  
COVID Response  
Incident  
Commander

# June 23, Maine State Chamber Hosting Employer Session that will focus on the “legalese” of some of these Return-To-Work issues



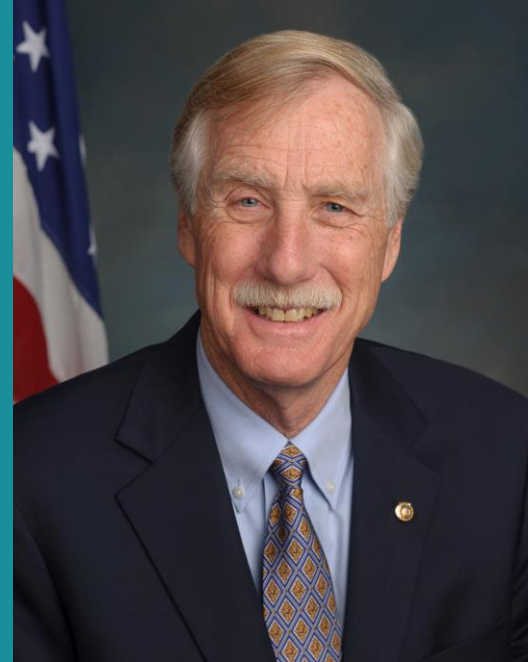
**[REGISTER TODAY!](#)**

***An Employer's Guide to COVID-Related  
Return-to-Work Issues***

# Welcome



Tim Dentry, MBA  
President and CEO  
Northern Light Health



Honorable Senator  
Angus S. King Jr.  
(I) Maine

# For more information or to submit a topic for a future Zoom Conference:

Contact:

Lanie Abbott

Director of Communications

[lwabbott@northernlight.org](mailto:lwabbott@northernlight.org)



# Join us next Thursday June 25, 11 am - noon: Risk Mitigation through Infection Prevention, Communication, and De-escalation



**Northern Light Health.**

One-hour Zoom conferences on Thursdays at 11 am starting on June 11.  
30 minute presentation, 30-minute moderated forum for Q&A

MEETING SERIES

Maine welcomes you! **SAFE RETURN TO BUSINESS** A Zoom conference series presented by Northern Light Health



If you want your employees and your customers focused on why they're at your business, instead of on whether they'll get sick, you'll want to attend our series. Our panels of experts will cover the topics and contingencies you need to prepare for to have your workforce present, engaged, and safe.

**Topics will include:**

- Infection Prevention – what precautions you need to take to keep employees and customers safe?
- What, When, Why, and How to communicate to employees and customers? Practical advice on how to de-escalate an upset customer
- Practical advice to de-escalate an upset customer

Learn how to support your employees and your customers to make a successful return to business.

WEEK 03 - Thursday, June 25 at 11 AM  
**RISK MITIGATION THROUGH INFECTION PREVENTION, COMMUNICATION, AND DE-ESCALATION**

MEETING ID:  
XXX XXX XXXXX

**Our Speakers:**

<b>Suzanne Moreshead, RN, BSN</b> Infection Control Specialist Northern Light Health	<b>Suzanne Spruce, AVP</b> Chief Marketing and Communications Officer Northern Light Health
<b>Yemaya St. Clair, LCPC-C</b> Employee Assistance Program Counselor Work Force	<b>James Jarvis, MD, FAAFP</b> Medical Director, Clinical Education Weekly COVID-19 Update on Testing Northern Light, Eastern Maine Medical Center

**Moderated by**  
**Ed Gilkey, MD, MS, MBA, CPE**  
Senior Physician  
Executive Beacon Health

**PLEASE REGISTER BY CLICKING HERE BEFORE JOINING THE MEETING**

Attendees are asked to join the conference by Zoom and listen to audio using your computer only. Please do not dial in while also connected via your computer. The dial-in number is for those not joining by computer. This will help accommodate a larger number of participants. **See you Thursday!**  
Please contact Lanle Abbott for more information [labbott@northernlight.org](mailto:labbott@northernlight.org)

# Legal Disclosure:

The Coronavirus pandemic is an ongoing, continuously evolving situation.

Northern Light Health (NLH) encourages everyone to follow federal and state governmental guidance and mandates.

NLH does not know the particulars of your situation, so the information presented today is general in nature and is based upon NLH's own experience, which may or may not apply in your specific situation, and which may be revised as we learn more about the Coronavirus.

Accordingly, following any guidance NLH presents today in no way guarantees that you, your employees and/or your customers and clients will not contract or spread the Coronavirus.

In regard to employment, every situation is unique, and must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure compliance with the law.

The information presented should not be taken as legal advice and you will need to retain your own counsel to review specific questions regarding employment situations and/or accommodations in your organization.

## Resources:

- [NLH Web Page Screening tool](https://covid.northernlighthealth.org/covidcheck)  
<https://covid.northernlighthealth.org/covidcheck>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>
- <http://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-05-19/revised-enforcement-guidance-recording-cases-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- <https://www.workhealthllc.org>