

Reporting Workplace Outbreaks to Toronto Public Health

A Guide for Employers

On January 4, 2021, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health issued a [Letter of Instruction](#) to all employers in the city of Toronto permitted to be open under the *Reopening Ontario Act*. These employers are required to take the additional measures set out in this Letter to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

This factsheet will help employers understand their responsibility to notify Toronto Public Health (TPH) about COVID-19 cases in the workplace, and how workplace outbreak information will be disclosed to the public.

Immediate notification to Toronto Public Health

Employers must immediately notify Toronto Public Health via the [Workplace Reporting Tool](#) as soon as they become aware of **two or more people** who test positive for COVID-19 within a 14-day interval in connection with their workplace premises.

Reporting cases of COVID-19 to reduce virus spread

- As a part of our role as a designated Public Health Unit in the Province of Ontario, TPH is made aware of all individuals in the city of Toronto who test positive for COVID-19. As a part of its case and contact management process, TPH staff interview each person with COVID-19 as soon as possible to ensure that they are self-isolating, and to help them identify people who may have been exposed to the virus while they were contagious.
- Immediately reporting two or more COVID-19 cases within the workplace will help TPH investigate clusters of COVID-19 cases in the workplace in order to:
 - determine if the infection was acquired at the workplace;
 - assess the risk of transmission to others; and
 - provide timely advice to employers to ensure the health and safety of others is protected.

Report cases of COVID-19 in the workplace using the [COVID-19 Workplace Reporting Tool](#).

Workplace vs. employer

- The *workplace* refers to the physical place of work – not the *employer*. A workplace can be any land, premises, location or thing at, upon, in or near which a worker works.

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- The *employer* refers to a person, company, or organization that employs people or has under its service a person engaged in work.
- For example, City Hall is a workplace, while the *City of Toronto* is an employer.
- If an employer becomes aware of two or more people who test positive for COVID-19 within a 14-day period, and those people have a connection to the same physical place of work, the employer must notify TPH.
- Large employers that have many workplaces only need to notify TPH when there are two or more cases in the same workplace setting (e.g. the same office).

Examples:

Joe's Auto Shop	Winnie's Green Grocer
<p>Employee Susanna tested positive for COVID-19 on January 2.</p> <p>Co-op student Preya tested positive for COVID-19 on January 9.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Two people tested positive within a 14-day period ✓ Both Susanna and Preya work at the Leaside auto shop location <p>Joe <u>must</u> notify TPH immediately.</p>	<p>Ahmed works at 200 Warden Ave., and tested positive for COVID-19 on February 15.</p> <p>Ilana works at 96 Jane St., and tested positive for COVID-19 on February 28.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Two people tested positive within a 14- day period ✗ Ahmed and Ilana work at different grocery locations <p>Winnie does <u>not</u> need to notify TPH.</p>

People at the workplace

- People may enter a workplace for a variety of reasons. They may be an employee, contracted worker, customer, visitor, etc.
- The employer shall report to TPH if they are aware of two or more people - workers, customers and/or visitors – at their workplace who have tested positive for COVID-19 within a 14-day period.
- Employees must report any situation in the workplace that is likely to be harmful to the health or safety of others in the workplace. This includes one's potential exposure to COVID-19 that caused or may cause illness to another person.
 - For example, if Gary tested positive for COVID-19 and was at the workplace while he was contagious, Gary must tell his employer as other people may now be infected.
- Staff must complete a [health screening questionnaire](#) before each shift, as per [provincial recommendations](#). Staff must stay home and self-isolate if they:
 - have new or worsening symptoms of COVID-19;

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- have had close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19; and/or
- have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days.

Designated contact person

- When notifying TPH of two or more cases in the workplace, employers provide the name and contact information for a designated person who can provide TPH with the details about the COVID-19 cases in your workplace.
- The contact person must:
 - be readily available to communicate with TPH; and
 - ensure any additional health and safety measures are implemented immediately, as required by TPH.

Contact information for workers

- Employers must maintain accurate and up-to-date contact information (e.g. name, telephone number, email address) for all workers.
- This information must be made available within 24 hours of notifying TPH of the COVID-19 cases in the workplace.
- This information will be used by TPH to conduct case and contact management.

Infection prevention and control

- Toronto Public Health will conduct an investigation of workplace outbreaks in some circumstances.
- Employers must cooperate with infection prevention and control personnel from TPH, which may include:
 - allowing entry into the workplace premises for inspection; and
 - implementing additional measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to other people.

Other reporting requirements

- In addition to notifying TPH, businesses must ensure that the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development and/or other relevant government authorities (e.g. WSIB) have been notified in accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and other applicable law.
- More information is available on the [Province of Ontario's website](#).

Disclosing information about workplace outbreaks

On January 18, 2021, the Toronto Board of Health requested the Medical Officer of Health to publicly post the names of workplaces with COVID-19 outbreaks on a weekly basis.

What information will be disclosed?

- TPH will disclose workplace outbreak information in a way that maintains and protects individual privacy. Information will include:
 - The number of active and cumulative workplace outbreaks in Toronto.
 - The names of workplaces in Toronto with an active outbreak.
- Data about all workplace outbreaks will be organized by sector.

Why is this information being disclosed?

- To keep the public and employers informed about where outbreaks are occurring.
- These outbreak reports are similar to those that TPH publishes for outbreaks in other settings such as schools (public and private), child care centres, shelters and congregate living settings, long-term care and retirement homes (public and private), and health care institutions.

Where will information be available?

- Information will be posted on the City of Toronto's [Status of Cases in Toronto Dashboard](#).

When will information be available?

- The dashboard will be updated weekly.

How will information be displayed?

- Workplaces will be grouped into the following categories:
 - Bar, restaurant, nightclub and other entertainment venues
 - Event venues, and religious facilities
 - Non-institutional medical health services, including doctor's offices, physiotherapy clinics, dental settings and wellness clinics
 - Personal service settings including hair salons, tattoo parlours, nail salons and spas
 - Recreational fitness facilities, group fitness classes, team sports and related events
 - Retail settings including grocery stores, pharmacies and malls
 - Farms
 - Food processing plants
 - Offices, warehouses, shipping and distribution, construction, and manufacturing settings

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- Other workplaces and community settings not captured in these categories
- Unknown

Other Resources

[Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[COVID-19 Workplace Reporting Tool](#)

Have questions? Call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 (8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.).