

MEMORANDUM

TO: Washington County Local Government and Businesses

FROM: William R. Loesch, MD, Local Health Authority for Washington County

DATE: 17 June 2020

RE: Return to work testing

Fellow Citizens of Washington County,

We have definitely been witnessing a steady stream of cases in Washington County over the last few weeks. Our neighbors to the north in Brazos County have unfortunately been hit very hard, and we are expecting a surge of cases possibly in the near future. The good news is, we've had a great number of cases recover, which is ironically causing our local health systems a bit of distress.

Currently, the CDC recommends two methods to clear a patient, and/or return them to work after they have contracted COVID-19; there is a test based strategy, where after an appropriate amount of time and recovery, two negative tests are performed to clear the patient, and a symptoms based strategy, which does not require testing. Details of both of these can be found on the CDC website.

With our recent experiences with the virus, in particular testing for "cure" in our nursing home environment, it became apparent that patients can shed virus particles for months at a time; current CDC and DSHS epidemiological studies conclude that during this time, these persons pose functionally no risk of transmission to others.

With the glut of recoveries we are having, and the expected spike in cases and need for testing, as well as due to limited number of testing kits available, I am recommending that the symptoms based strategy be implemented by all employers in Washington County at this time. My recommendation is that any patient that has been diagnosed with COVID-19 be cleared by their primary care provider or a physician prior to return to work, and that you not "require" a negative test to return to work.

This has been a long road, and it is definitely not over. Should you have any specific questions regarding this policy, please feel free to reach out to me or Emergency Management for further guidance. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

William R. Loesch, MD, FACP  
Local Health Authority for Washington County