

## Reporting Workplace Outbreaks to the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit

### Guidance for Employers, Business Owners, & Operators

This reporting guide provides information for employers to understand their roles in a suspected workplace outbreak, their responsibility to notify the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) about COVID-19 cases in the workplace, and how workplace outbreak information will be disclosed to the public.

#### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Employers with questions related to a COVID-19 outbreak in the workplace may contact the WECHU by calling 519-258-2146, pressing 0 to reach our phone directory, and then pressing 0 again to reach the COVID Hotline. You can notify us of the situation and an outbreak investigation may be initiated based on the information provided. If the call is unanswered, please leave a voicemail and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

#### **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, WECHU is made aware of all individuals in Windsor-Essex County who test positive for COVID-19.
- As part of the case and contact management process, WECHU staff contacts each person with COVID-19 as soon as possible to ensure they are self-isolating, and to assist them in identifying 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 the WECHU 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

#### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

- A person with COVID-19 is contagious from 48 hours before symptoms begin until the end of their self-isolation period, usually 10 days after the symptoms began.
- If someone tested positive for COVID-19 but did not have symptoms, they are considered to be contagious from 48 hours before the test to 10 days after the test.

*Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health*

*Current as of February 1, 2021*

**Definitions: Workplace vs. Employer**

- The **workplace** refers to the physical place of work, rather than the employer. A workplace can be any land, premises, location or thing at, upon, in or near which a worker works.
- 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 Windsor 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 the WECHU.
- Larger employers that have many workplaces or work sites only need to notify the WECHU when there are two or more cases in the **same workplace setting** (e.g., the same office), and not when the cases are linked to different workplaces.

**Scenario**

The two hypothetical examples provided below illustrate the various scenarios in which an employer must notify the Health Unit about a possible workplace-related outbreak and instances when a notification is not necessary, as a workplace outbreak is unlikely.

<b>Joe’s Auto Shop</b>	<b>Mike’s Corner Store</b>
<p><b>Scenario:</b> Sue, an employee of Joe’s Auto Shop, tested positive for COVID-19 on January 14 John is a co-op student who tested positive for COVID-19 on January 21.</p>	<p><b>Scenario:</b> Tim works at Mike’s Corner Store in <b>Downtown Windsor</b>. He tested positive for COVID-19 on January 21. Alana works at Mike’s Corner Store in <b>Leamington</b>. She also tested positive for COVID-19 on January 28.</p>
<p><b>Takeaway:</b> ✓ Two people tested positive within a 14-day period ✓ Both Sue and John work at the same auto shop location in the same workspace</p>	<p><b>Takeaway:</b> ✓ Two people tested positive within a 14-day period ✗ Tim and Alana work at different grocery store locations</p>
<p><b>Decision:</b> Joe (or the employer of Joe’s Auto Shop) <b>must notify WECHU immediately.</b></p>	<p><b>Decision:</b> Mike (or the employer of Mike’s Corner Store) <b>does NOT need to notify WECHU.</b></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 the WECHU if they are aware of two or more people 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 someone tested positive for COVID-19 and was at the workplace while they were contagious, they must tell their employer as other people may now be infected.
- Staff must complete a self-assessment using a [COVID-19 Screening Tool](#) before each shift, as per [provincial recommendations](#). Staff must stay home and self isolate if they:
  - Have new or worsening symptoms of COVID-19
  - Have had close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19
  - Have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days
  - Received a notification from the COVID Alert app indicating that they have been exposed

### Designated Contact Person

- When notifying the WECHU of two or more cases in workplace, employers must provide the name and contact information for a designated person who can provide WECHU with the details about the COVID-19 cases in the workplace. Contact information should also be provided for after regular business hours and/or weekends.
- The contact person must be readily available to communicate with WECHU and ensure that any additional health and safety measures are implemented immediately, as required by WECHU.

### 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 the WECHU of the COVID-19 cases in the workplace.
- This information will be used by the WECHU to conduct case and contact management.

### Other Reporting Requirements

- In addition to notifying the WECHU, businesses must also notify the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development and/or other relevant government authorities (e.g., WSIB) 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

- In the event that WECHU discloses workplace outbreak information, it will be done in a way that maintains and protects individual privacy, while keeping the public and employers informed about where outbreaks are occurring. Disclosed information may include:
  - The number of active and cumulative workplace outbreaks in Windsor-Essex County
  - The names of workplaces in Windsor-Essex County with an active outbreak

- Information about current workplace, community, school, hospital, and long-term care/retirement home outbreaks is updated daily and is available on the [Local COVID-19 Data webpage](#). More information on outbreaks in schools can be found by visiting the [COVID-19 School Outbreak webpage](#).

## RESOURCES

### Windsor-Essex County Health Unit

- [Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace: Guidance for Employers, Owners, and Operators](#)
- [COVID-19 Decision Guide for Workplaces](#)