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www.timiskaminghu.com

December 7, 2020

Dear Business Owner/Operator,

I am writing to share lessons learned from workplace outbreaks across the province, with the goal of helping businesses improve their COVID-19 precautions as cases in Ontario increase and as we enter the holiday season.

Public health is required to declare an outbreak if we believe it's possible that two or more people may have gotten COVID-19 at your business. In our district, there are many employees who have a permanent home address in another community. If one of them were to get COVID-19, you may learn about their test results before we do. If you believe someone has been exposed to a case of COVID-19 at your business, we encourage you to reach out to us.

During the outbreak investigation, we will require your help to determine who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and where in the workplace that transmission may have occurred. We will help arrange for expedited testing of your employees and isolate anyone with a high-risk exposure for the 14 days following their last contact with a case. Closing a business is a last resort and will only be done if we feel there is no way for you to continue to operate safely.

To minimize the potential impact of COVID-19 in your workplace, you should:

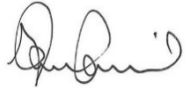
- Screen staff and ensure anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 remains off-work until they feel better and have tested negative;
- Cohort staff and keep shifts together to minimize the number of contacts any one person has within your business;
- Discourage carpooling unless everyone in the car is from the same household;
- Encourage staff who can work from home to do so;
- Ensure that staff follow public health guidelines about masking and distancing within your workplace;
- Ensure that staff wear their face coverings properly. Face coverings must cover the mouth and nose. Individuals must always wear their face covering unless they are safely distanced from both coworkers and customers.

Patterns in outbreaks have emerged among public-facing organizations. Staff follow the rules when interacting with the public, but let their guard down on break or when interacting with coworkers. They remove their mask and fail to distance in meeting rooms, break areas, back offices, and when socializing outside of the workplace. **We encourage you to pay close attention to these areas in order to limit the potential spread of COVID.**

As we enter the holiday season, we need everyone to celebrate responsibly. Staff Christmas parties could easily turn into an outbreak that jeopardizes the health of your employees and the greater community. Sharing an in-person meal with co-workers is strongly discouraged. If you do hold an in-person party, it must be masked and physically distanced. A safer option is to have staff pick up a meal and then go someplace safe to remove their mask and eat.

If you have any questions, please contact the Timiskaming Health Unit at 1-866-747-4305.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Corneil', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Glenn Corneil
Acting Medical Officer of Health/CEO