

CDC REDEFINES “CLOSE CONTACT” FOR PURPOSES OF CONTACT TRACING

If you were beginning to get comfortable applying and working through the CDC guidelines in your workforce, buckle up and get ready for a wild ride because things are about to change – AGAIN!

This week, the CDC revised its definition of “close contact” for purposes of contact tracing. Now, “close contact” means being “within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.”

You’re probably thinking, “Yeah, we’ve heard about the 6-feet, 15-minute thing. What’s the big deal?” Well, the big deal is that the CDC is now calculating the 15 minutes cumulatively, which means that **multiple brief interactions throughout the day could trigger a “close contact” finding.** For example, three separate five-minute interactions with an infected person during a 24-hour period would be considered a “close contact” with the infected individual. This is a significant change since being in “close contact” with an infected individual will trigger the need to quarantine. The bottom line is that all employees will need to be much more alert and vigilant in keeping track of their whereabouts and interactions throughout the ***entire day, every day.*** Similarly, employers will need to revisit workplace practices, particularly with respect to contact tracing protocols following a positive case. Under these circumstances, employers should continue to work cooperatively with local health departments to contact trace as best as possible based on the new “close contact” criteria.

Please be reminded that this is an overview of developing legal issues and is not intended to be and should not be construed as legal advice. For more specific information, contact Nadia A. Lampton at nlampton@taftlaw.com or (937) 641-2055.