

For Immediate Release: April 9, 2019

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Flawed CDC Guidance Endangers Workers' Lives, Say Worker Safety Advocates

Worker safety advocates from the Center for Progressive Reform (CPR) and the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (National COSH) expressed outrage today at the [newly released coronavirus guidance from the U.S. Centers for Diseases Control \(CDC\)](#), which fails to protect essential workers, is weaker than previous guidance, and is not based on scientific evidence. Reports of essential workers dying on the job from the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the need for additional protections, not less.

Under the revised guidance, employers can now mandate that employees who have been exposed to coronavirus continue to work while pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic, despite evidence this deadly disease can spread up to 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms. Instead, the CDC is endangering worker health and safety to “ensure continuity of operations of essential functions.”

“CDC’s flawed guidance contradicts its previous guidance for businesses and its current recommendations for members of the public who’ve been exposed to coronavirus, which is to quarantine for 14 days after a potential exposure,” said Matthew Shudtz, Executive Director at the Center for Progressive Reform. “Forcing our nation’s essential workers to remain on the job after exposure poses great risks, not just to their health, but to their coworkers, their families, and the community at large.”

“With the number of COVID-19 cases continuing to rise across the country, this guidance threatens to undo any gains made by states working desperately to prevent deadly exposures and save lives,” said Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, co-executive director of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (National COSH). “This unsound guidance sends the message to our critical frontline workers that their government and employers view them as expendable.”

What’s needed instead, say safety advocates, is the immediate implementation of protective safeguards, guaranteed paid sick leave for all workers in these critical sectors, a presumption that infection occurred at work so that the workers are eligible for workers’ compensation and other benefits, and close monitoring of workplace COVID-19 infections. All workplaces that are not truly essential should be closed to focus resources on critical sectors.

CPR and National COSH are calling on the CDC to retract this unsound guidance immediately and ensure businesses are provided with science-based guidelines that focus on preventing workers, their families, and their communities from contracting COVID-19.

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National COSH links the efforts of local worker health and safety coalitions in communities across the United States, advocating for elimination of preventable hazards in the workplace. For more information, please visit coshnetwork.org. Follow us at National Council for Occupational Safety and Health on [Facebook](#), and [@NationalCOSH](#) on Twitter.