NEW FAQs – Week of May 11 – 15, 2020

1. *Many providers are asking for a negative COVID result after a confirmed positive. We are finding that many patients, even after waiting the two weeks, are returning positive a second time. Can you please provide any guidance surrounding this?*

From the COVID-19 Response Team:

We do not suggest retesting. We prefer the symptom-based strategy and not the test-based strategy for releasing individuals from isolation.

2. *I feel like this organization's policies discourage employees from getting tested for COVID-19. Why would someone like myself, who lives alone and isn't putting loved ones in danger, want to get tested knowing I'd have to exhaust my PTO if I tested positive? I just thought this organization would be more encouraging and supportive of employees getting tested since the safety of staff and employees is supposed to be top priority.*

From the COVID-19 Response Team:

We are working on this. In the future, we may be able to offer testing to our employees without them having to see us as a patient-provider relationship. The same rule would apply, though; if someone tests positive, they would need to stay home in isolation via our temporary Workforce Management Policy.

3. *Why is it that when employees are tested for COVID-19 they are still coming to work regardless of whether they are asymptomatic? Shouldn't they be at home isolated for 10 days? OR until the results show up as negative? Or does that rule only apply to our patients? Can we please clarify? These employees are currently still coming to work.*

From the COVID-19 Response Team:

If staff are getting tested because of a specific reason, like symptoms or a known, unprotected contact, then they should isolate until the test comes back. If they take a test for no reason other than personal curiosity and for pure surveillance, then they don't need to isolate. We do mandate that everyone conduct their work in a way that assumes everyone could have an asymptomatic infection and could be contagious. Everyone should wear a mask at all times, physically distance, and practice environmental and hand hygiene.

4. *How am I supposed to answer employee screening question #2 truthfully if information of others being COVID-positive is not being communicated? Am I forced to answer NO every time I take my screening? Doesn't that make the screening useless?*

From the COVID-19 Response Team:

Employees need to answer the employee screening questions to the best of their knowledge as it pertains to their work environment. Employee-related COVID test results need to be managed as PHI. Under HIPAA, we do not disclose screening results to other employees, but the organization would send out an exposure notice to those who may have come in contact with a positive employee/patient after investigating. Keep in mind that wearing personal protective equipment, practicing social distancing, and cleaning your work station can help reduce/stop the spread of COVID-19 to co-workers/family members.

5. *Why are only certain employees wearing masks? Who needs to enforce the wearing of masks?*

From the COVID-19 Response Team:

All employees are expected to adhere to masking and physical distancing guidelines while at the office. Hand washing, practicing social distancing, not touching our faces, and staying home while sick are all measures we can use to avoid being infected by COVID-19. For specific concerns about adherence to these guidelines, employees may contact their supervisor or any leader, or a Human Resources Business Partner. Employees may also report concerns anonymously via the Compliance Hotline. http://sps2010/compliance/default.aspx