



## Interim Guidance: Asking COVID-19 Screening Questions at Any Businesses, Organization, Or Facility

Updated May 26, 2020

The following guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for use by local businesses and organizations, and will be posted at <http://www.sfcdcp.org>. This interim guidance may change as knowledge, community transmission, and availability of PPE and testing change.

*Note: Updated from prior version to improve readability; corrected to reference CalOSHA (p.3).*

**AUDIENCE:** Businesses and organizations that screen personnel and others arriving at their facility or location for COVID-19. “Business” includes many types of organizations, such as healthcare facilities, nonprofit organizations, employers, community-based organizations and others. “Personnel” includes employees, contract workers, gig-workers, volunteers and others.

**BACKGROUND:** In San Francisco, certain businesses and organizations are **required** to ask personnel about symptoms of COVID-19 before they start work each day as part of a Health Officer order or directive. For an up to date list of Health Officer orders and directives, and what businesses are required to do, please see: <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp>. This document provides guidance on asking personnel and others entering a location about COVID-19 symptoms and exposure.

**This guidance is not meant for screening patients or long-term care residents as part of medical intake or triage process.**

### Daily Screening Questions for COVID-19

Some businesses are **required to ask each day** the COVID-19 screening questions that are in the “**Handout for Personnel (Employees, Contractors, Volunteers) of Essential Business and Other Businesses Permitted to Operate During the Health Emergency.**” Businesses must ask all personnel these questions each day before work. The required screening questions are posted at [www.sfcdcp.org/screening-handout](http://www.sfcdcp.org/screening-handout).

Also, at this time, all businesses and organizations are encouraged to ask personnel about COVID-19 before they start work each day **even if they are not required to do so** by a Health Officer order or directive.

**Asking about symptoms and exposure to COVID-19 should not replace other measures such as frequent handwashing, having everyone in the building wear face coverings, staying 6 feet apart, and creating physical barriers like plexi-glass windows when people momentarily must be closer than 6 feet, for example to pay for an item.**

### Do You Need To Measure Temperatures Too?

The San Francisco Department of Public Health discourages measuring temperatures of personnel, except under **special circumstances in very specific settings** where measuring temperatures is **required**. Specifically, the CDC recommends both asking about COVID-19 and taking the temperatures of certain workers as well as personnel and others entering health care facilities, nursing homes, jails, homeless shelters and childcare facilities.



For other settings, temperature checks have significant costs and may have potential risks to the personnel who are measuring temperatures. The costs would include the need to dedicate staff at each entrance to screen all persons entering as well as possible delays in staff beginning work at the start of a workshift. Costs also include buying the temperature-measuring devices. Even after temperature-measuring devices are purchased, ongoing training is needed to keep personnel safe, and ongoing costs exist for installing, maintaining and cleaning barriers and/or stocking enough personal protective equipment for the personnel who are measuring temperatures.

If you are specifically required to ask COVID-19 screening questions and measure temperatures, go here [www.sfcdcp.org/temperature](http://www.sfcdcp.org/temperature) for guidance on measuring temperatures.

## Determine Timing of Asking The COVID-19 Screening Questions

An important first step is to decide when you will ask the COVID-19 daily screening questions.

- Will personnel answer the COVID-19 screening questions before personnel arrive at your location?
  - For COVID-19 questions, individuals can report by email, text, phone, app, or website
- Or upon arrival to your organization?
  - Asking COVID-19 screening questions when personnel arrive will require setting up a COVID-19 screening question station. See below for details.

Please be aware you **do not need to ask both** before and after arrival for the same personnel. Questions should be asked on the calendar day that work starts, before personnel begin their work.

## Setting up COVID-19 Screening Question Stations

Who asks and answers the questions?

- Determine who will be asked about possible COVID-19 symptoms and possible COVID-19 exposure: personnel only or everyone entering the building?
- Determine who will be asking about the COVID-19 screening questions.
  - Minimize the number of staff who ask the screening questions.
  - If you do not have enough staff, the time needed to ask personnel the screening questions can create a bottleneck at the entrance, delaying the start of work and causing long lines.

Create safer ways to ask questions:

- Please note: All adults and adolescents should be wearing a facemask or face covering when being asked screening questions in-person, in accordance with SF Health Order No. C19-12. Those without a face mask or face covering may be offered one, as supplies permit. This face covering may be as simple as a bandana or similar cloth square.
- Remove objects that are shared. For example, do not share pens.



## Where will screening happen?

- Determine where the symptom screening will take place.
  - Ideally, the screening should occur before the person enters the building, or close to the building entrance.
  - Buildings may need to close some entrances to keep people from entering without being screened
  - The entrance should have enough space around it for personnel to stay 6 feet apart while awaiting screening at the start of a work shift.
  - The screener and the person being screened should be at least 6 feet apart from each other and from others
  - If asking questions verbally, the screening stations should be set up to preserve the confidentiality of the person being screened.
- Screen individuals by asking the questions about symptoms and possible exposure to COVID-19 at [www.sfgdcp.org/screening-handout](http://www.sfgdcp.org/screening-handout)
- Information about what to do if someone answers “Yes” to the screening questions is also part of the “Handout for Personnel (Employees, Contractors, Volunteers) of Essential Business and Other Businesses Permitted to Operate During the Health Emergency” to all personnel (posted at [www.sfgdcp.org/screening-handout](http://www.sfgdcp.org/screening-handout) )
- Information about what to do if an employee is positive for COVID-19 is here: [www.sfgdcp.org/covid19-positive-workplace](http://www.sfgdcp.org/covid19-positive-workplace)

## Should businesses keep personnel temperatures and symptoms on file?

Businesses can decide whether they want to keep COVID-19 screening questions. If so, Cal/OSHA requires businesses to keep these documents for 30 years after the employee leaves the organization. See Cal/OSHA’s Access to Employee Exposure and Medical Records standard (8 CCR 3204).

## Resources

Stay informed. Information is changing rapidly. Useful resources can be found at:

### San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFPDH)

- **COVID-19 Guidance:** [www.sfgdcp.org/covid19](http://www.sfgdcp.org/covid19)
- **Return to Work:** [www.sfgdcp.org/rtw](http://www.sfgdcp.org/rtw)
- **When a staff member has a positive COVID-19 test:** [www.sfgdcp.org/covid19-positive-workplace](http://www.sfgdcp.org/covid19-positive-workplace)

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- **General Business Frequently Asked Questions**  
[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html)