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CDC Expands Definition of “Close Contact”

On Wednesday, October 21, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control (“CDC”) expanded on the definition of “close contact” for purposes of tracing cases of COVID-19, based on a new study. Previously, the CDC’s definition of “close contact” included individuals who spent 15 minutes or more within six feet of an individual infected with COVID-19. Now, the CDC has updated its definition of “close contact” to include individuals “within six 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.” This expansion of the definition does not limit the exposure of an infected individual to 15 consecutive minutes, but rather an individual is a “close contact” if he or she had multiple brief interactions with an infected individual that total 15 minutes within 24 hours.

The CDC recommends that individuals who are considered “close contacts” follow quarantine protocols. This updated definition may lead to more individuals being identified as “close contacts” and therefore more individuals recommended to self-quarantine to further prevent the spread of COVID-19. As always, we encourage employers to consult with their local health department and follow local orders and recommendations, as well. In the event your organization adopts changes consistent with the new protocols, consider the means by which the changes will be communicated, appropriate staff will be trained, and measures will be adopted to monitor implementation.

If you have any questions about this Legal Update, please contact Attorney Claire Hartley at 262-364-0260 or chartley@buelowvetter.com, or Attorney Emily Turzinski at 262-364-0268 or eturzinski@buelowvetter.com, or your Buelow Vetter attorney.