

Covid 19 my story

I work for the Employment Department in a Contact Center processing Unemployment Insurance Claims. I feel that the Employment Department is not doing a good job at keeping us safe from Covid-19. Here is my story. I still don't know if I got Covid-19 or not. Since I was not tested due to lack of testing supplies until it was 33 days after my first symptoms.

On March 16th I got sick with Covid 19 symptoms. I was told to stay home until I don't have symptoms for 72 hours.

3 days later I heard that a list of people that could work from home was being made. I sent an E-mail to the people making the list. "If the State ever says we can start working from home. I want to be on the list of people that can. Even after I get over this illness. I have health issues that makes CoVid-12 more dangerous for me." I got a response that said I could not work from home.

The next day I ended up Emergency Room in the hospital with breathing problems. I was released that same day with new medications for my breathing problems. The doctor said for me to be careful and stay home.

Four days later the doctor called to check on me and I told him I still have symptoms. They wrote me another note for work.

Nine days later on a Friday my supervisor called and told me I had to get back to work. I had been out of work to long. I had at this time missed 15 days of work. So I went back on Monday the cough was only gone 24 hours.

On that next Monday I was so happy to be able to help people again. My new shift was 2pm to 10:30pm. Our mainframe system shuts down at 7pm. So from 7pm to about 8:30 pm we would answer the phone and tell people we can't do anything for them. We would put them on a call back list, but we didn't have any idea when they would get called back. When the phone queues were all answered we stated other busy work. We would just look at documents in our imaging system and determine if an issue was brought up on the paper work. If there was we put it back so someone could look at it again and make folders and comments. If no issue we could send it on its way so no one else had to look at it.

I was also told that our cleaning crew is wiping down surfaces every night. That night the cleaning crew came through my section. All they did was empty the trash.

I don't remember what day it was but we got informed that someone I worked with that was there the day I came back to work was told she had tested positive for Covid 19.

I expected them to close the office for extensive cleaning. They told us they didn't have to do that because our cleaning crew is doing a good job. So back to work we go as if nothing happened. No masks, No real extra cleaning. Just back to work.

Only 3 days later I got sick again with more Covid 19 like symptoms. This time it was worse than the last time.

8 days later on a Friday someone told me to try to get tested again. Since they are doing more testing at this time. I called the doctor again. I was tested it came back and said I didn't have Covid 19. My Doctor put a note on the test saying just because I didn't have it now doesn't mean I didn't have it earlier.

That following Monday I went back to work. After missing 6 days of work. I worked only same shift and working conditions. Clean crew came in took out the garbage, cleaned bathrooms and left. I had an E-mail saying they did do some deep cleaning while I was gone. Funny thing about that I could tell the carpet had not been vacuumed. The dust on my shelf was still there.

24 days later I got sick again. More Covid 19 like symptoms. I haven't been able to go back to work yet. This time my Doctor got mad at me and said "With my health issues I should not be going to work. Going back is just going to make me get sick again. I should work from home." He wrote me a note saying I should work from home.

I sent an E-mail asking if I could please work from home like we use to do over 10 years ago. I was part of a team of people doing my same job that would work from home. We could do that if for some reason the Office was closed. We did stay home once a month to make sure it worked. We had laptop computers and cell phones. Then we were told we could not do that anymore. They said system we had could not handle us working from home. If we still had that working it would have been easy for people at high risk to work from home. At home the Business and Employment Specialist could have work 8am – 5pm when the mainframe system is work. They could have been processing some of the over 300,000 Unemployment Claims and work the Mail in our imaging system. Our Adjudicators could have been making decisions so people could have gotten their money faster. There is lots of work that could be done at home for those of us that are at high risk. I could have been working when I just had just a cough. I would not have had to keep getting sick. Every day I would see signs on the highway that read **"Stay Home Save Lives"**. I could have stayed home.

I was told I could not work from home. So again due to being told no I will be going back to work once I go 72 hours without any symptoms. I can't afford any unpaid leave. I have used all my personal leave time, sick leave, and vacation leave. I am on paid administrative leave as long as I still have symptoms.

I wish I could say that I feel save at work. I just don't feel like they are doing much to prevent us from getting sick. I know years from now when people look back on how much the Oregon Employment Department didn't do to keep us safe. People will say why didn't they care about the workers? What could have been done to get money to people faster? It will be a very sad day for everyone at the Oregon Employment Department as they have to admit we could have if only we would have.

I have missed a total of 224 hours of work.

Concerned Employment Department staff