Business Planning for the COVID-19 Coronavirus

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to make headlines and spread into new states and communities, it is important that employers prepare themselves and their employees. In recent days we have seen schools close due to a diagnosis, we have seen businesses encourage employees to work from home, and we have seen a decline in supplies in grocery and convenience stores. The question becomes: what is right for your business and your employees?

If you are in a community where a diagnosis has occurred, you should certainly follow your local Department of Health closely for information. It is important as a business that you are aware of the symptoms and prepare for employees to stay home from work, either to care for themselves or a loved one. As schools experience diagnoses and potentially closed, you need to be prepared for employees who need to alter their work schedule or miss work due to no childcare. If you are in an area where no one has been diagnosed yet, then you should still prepare and communicate a plan to staff so everyone is more comfortable.

What should be in your Plan?

As you put together a plan of action consider what your overall goal is and what is the most impactful to your business and your employees. Some items to consider:

- What positions are considered essential? These are the positions you want to ensure have remote access to maintain, at least, minimal business operations.
- How will you communicate with your employees if they are working remotely? A best practice would be to set up a daily department conference call or a manager call; these phone calls ensure you have daily contact and can work through any questions or issues that arise.
- How will you communicate with your customers, vendors, clients? Prepare your communication plan and know how this will go out quickly and efficiently to everyone; maintain your social media presence and update your web page.
- How will you maintain your facility? Take advantage of an empty office by arranging a deep clean and sanitization of your building. This will ensure when staff do return that your office is clean and you have done everything you can do kill off any germs that may linger.
- Educate your employees on the symptoms and how to stop the spread of COVID-19 or any other germ(s).
- Do you have staff who are required to travel? Determine what is essential travel and postpone all other non-essential trips. Educate your staff on what to do if traveling.

How to prepare your workforce for absences?

Another area of concern is employee absences and maintaining the workload. If an employee experiences an illness and is suspected of being contagious, be it the Flu or COVID-19, the employee should stay home. The same holds true if they have a family member who has been diagnosed and they are the caregiver, they could easily transmit the virus, so it is important to ensure you have a plan to allow employees to stay home or work from home.

As schools have closed or potentially will close, parents may find it difficult to have childcare for an extended period of time. What can you do to accommodate this need?

- Allow staff to use their PTO, sick or vacation time
- Allow staff a reprieve and be off work without having to use their time off
- Allow staff to work from home, if technology is available and the type of work allows for this
- Allow an alternative work schedule to accommodate childcare needs, if possible

In some ways preparing for and reacting to COVID-19 is no different than having a contingency plan for a natural disaster or fire. The same considerations hold true: what is essential, what is the time frame to be back up and running, and how do you accommodate staff? If you don't already have this type of plan ready then maximize on this current situation, develop your immediate plan then build on it to secure a long-term contingency plan to ensure your business maintains optimal operations.

As always, it is important to get up-to-date information from our national, state and local partners. Please refer to the following for guidance and information from national resources.

- [Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)