

COVID 19 Related Workplace Employee Policies

Dear Client:

The CDC, ADA, OSHA and Dept of Labor have issued guidelines for employers to help them develop policies that aim to protect workers and prevent further spread of the virus. Our office has reviewed the information and created policies based on these guidelines.

Implementation of some policies requires the employer to provide certain materials, tools and equipment to the employees, as well as ensure adherence to housekeeping practices are routine disinfecting of public, highly-trafficked and shared spaces.

Below is a summary of the information, as well as suggested policies that you could add to your employee handbook.

Summary of Guidelines.

OSHA's General Duty clause requires employers to furnish to each worker "employment and a place of employment" which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm. Other OSHA standards and requirements apply to COVID-19 situations and must be followed, including recordkeeping requirements and injury/illness recording criteria, and application of standards related to sanitation, as well as communication of risk related to hazardous chemicals that may be in common sanitizers.

The CDC suggests that employee must stay at home and inform employer if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. This is necessary as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the virus at the workplace.

The symptoms are:

People with COVID-19 have a wide range of symptoms, which can be mild to severe. Most symptoms appear within 2-14 days from the time of exposure to the virus.

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headaches
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell.

Precautions

In order to make it easier for your employees to maintain a clean and disinfected workplace, the employer must provide the tools and equipment necessary. Employer should have disinfectant solutions, wipes at each workstation, non-touch trash receptacles, and soap and running water for employees to use to wash their hands. If able, employers should provide gloves, masks and other personal protective equipment to all employees. The employer must also ensure that the high-traffic areas such as the kitchen, breakroom, bathroom and water-station are cleaned on a frequent basis. The solutions used to clean must be EPA approved and claim to work against emerging viral pathogens.

It is also important for employers whose businesses require interacting with the general public or customers, to enforce social distancing protocols and ensure consistent cleaning and disinfecting of areas where the interaction takes place. They are also encouraged to provide customers with easy access to tissues and trash receptacles.

If you have employees with high-risk due to age or pre-existent conditions, it is advised that you provide them with the flexible work options including working from home, working in areas less trafficked in the office, working reduced hours or working staggered shifts, if possible.

If an employee experiences symptom while in the office, it is important to send the employee home and immediately disinfect the employee's workstation and/or office.

It is also important to reduce high-risk employees' exposure to high traffic in situations where their work requires interacting with customers and the general public. OSHA recommends that employers cross-train their employees across different areas of operations in order to reduce the work force, if necessary, and to prepare for situations where employees are sick, causing the need to downsize.

Sick leave policies should be flexible to allow employees who must care for sick persons at home to be able to do so without fear. It is important for the employers to explain to employees their sick and paid leave benefits.

In addition to work-place practices, if the employer is able, the employer should have engineering controls in place to prevent the spread of the illness. These controls include:

- Installing high-efficiency air filters.
- Increasing ventilation rates in the work environment.
- Installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards.
- Installing a drive-through window for customer service.
- Specialized negative pressure ventilation in some settings, such as for aerosol generating procedures (e.g., airborne infection isolation rooms in healthcare settings and specialized autopsy suites in mortuary settings).

It is also the employer's responsibility to provide digital communication tools that help reduce the amount of in-person interaction between employees. The tools include email, instant messaging, phones, and computers for employees willing to work from home.

Keeping the employees informed and educated on COVID-19, how it spreads, and how they can keep themselves safe is important. Safety protocols and precautions are provided by the CDC and other governmental organizations.

The ADA and COVID

The ADA published guidelines for employers to follow during COVID-19. Employers may ask employees if they are experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19. Employers may measure employees body temperatures and may require employees to stay home and bring with them a doctor's note certifying that the employee is fit for duty. Employers may also administer COVID - 19 testing to determine whether or not an employee entering the workplace has the virus.

EMPLOYEE COVID-19 RELATED POLICIES

(name of employer) will work hard to provide you with what you need to stay safe at the workplace. The following policies take effect immediately and may be updated or changed at any time. (name of employer) will provide you with pertinent information if any changes or updates take place.

When to Stay Home

To help us prevent the spread of the virus in the office, if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, stay home at the first sign of a symptom, and call the office to inform us of your symptoms and when they began

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headaches
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell.

If Experiencing Symptoms While at the Office

If you begin to experience any of the symptoms above while at the office, you must inform the appropriate personnel via email or phone, and immediately leave the office. Your station/office will be disinfected immediately after your departure.

Coming Back to Work After Recovering from COVID-19.

If you are not able to obtain a test to determine if you are still contagious, you cannot come back to work unless all of these three things have happened:

- You do not have any fever for at least 72 hours (three days) without the use of any medicine to reduce the fever, AND
- At least 7 days have passed since the symptoms first appeared, AND
- Other symptoms, such as cough or shortness of breath, have improved.

If you will be tested, the following three things must happen before you can come back to work:

- You no longer have a fever, without the use of fever reducers, AND
- Your other symptoms have improved, AND
- You received two negative tests in a row, 24 hours a part.

(name of employer) will request your test results to ensure that you are not contagious.

While in The Office

During the workday, you are required to take precautions that will help prevent the spread of the disease. These precautions include:

- While at work, employees must adhere to frequent handwashing and wiping of workstation and equipment.
- Employees must also wash their hands first upon entering the office.
- Lunches and breaks will be staggered as to prevent overcrowding in lunchrooms and/or parking lots. You must follow the break schedule.
- Employees must engage in respiratory etiquette by covering the mouth with tissue or cloth when sneezing or coughing. If no paper tissue is available, employees are encouraged to not cough on their hands, but instead on the arm or the inner curve of the elbow.
- Employees must be at least 6 feet apart at all times while moving around the workplace.
- Employees are strongly discouraged from using other colleague's phones, desks, offices or any other work tools and equipment. If the employee must do so, he or she must wipe the tools or equipment with a solution that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- High touch areas such as the kitchen, bathrooms and water-station must be cleaned with a disinfectant regularly.
- Employees are discouraged from sharing personal items and must disinfect items regularly. These items include bottles of lotion, water bottles, lunchboxes, bags and purses...etc.
- Employees should reduce opportunities for interaction with other employees by scheduling virtual meetings and using electronic means of communication.

(name of employer) may require COVID-19 testing of any and all employees entering the office, at any time. Employees who refuse to take the test may be sent home or potentially terminated if the employer believes the employee poses a health risk of potential exposure.