



## COVID-19 – Resource guide for HR

### Strategic Business Considerations for Human Resources—Best Practices for Return to Work

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#### Consider business needs realistically

- Considerations: Which employees or departments would be a priority to bring back?
- Consider staggering the return of others in order to maintain some distancing safety measures.
- Follow the plan of your local and state level government to re-engage by searching your local/state governments website. In Michigan, the MI SAFE START plan can be found here:  
[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/MI\\_SAFE\\_START\\_PLAN\\_689875\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/MI_SAFE_START_PLAN_689875_7.pdf)

#### Consult with OSHA

- OSHA recommends classifying employees by risk (such as those with any known health conditions, advanced age, pregnancy, etc.). Jobs themselves should also be classified by exposure risk. Jobs classified as medium or high exposure risk should include an interim plan to protect employees. OSHA's recommendations are here: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

#### Consult with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Besides educational materials and testing information, guidance on how to prepare and maintain a safe and healthy workplace can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

#### Develop policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of sick employees.

- Consider interim changes in US Federal Employment Law when thinking about, implementing and adjusting policies that support a safe return to work. Stay abreast of the latest Federal Employment Law Guidelines here <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic> or consult your corporate attorney for state guidelines.

- You can also consult the Department of Labor <https://www.dol.gov/> and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission <https://www.eeoc.gov/>

### **Develop, implement, and communicate workplace flexibilities and protections (see also Administrative Controls below)**

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.
- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for others.



### **Operational Considerations: Implement workplace controls including:**

- **Engineering Controls**
  - Engineering controls involve isolating employees from work-related hazards. In workplaces where they are appropriate, these types of controls reduce exposure without relying on worker behavior. Engineering controls for SARS-CoV-2, depending on the industry may 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).

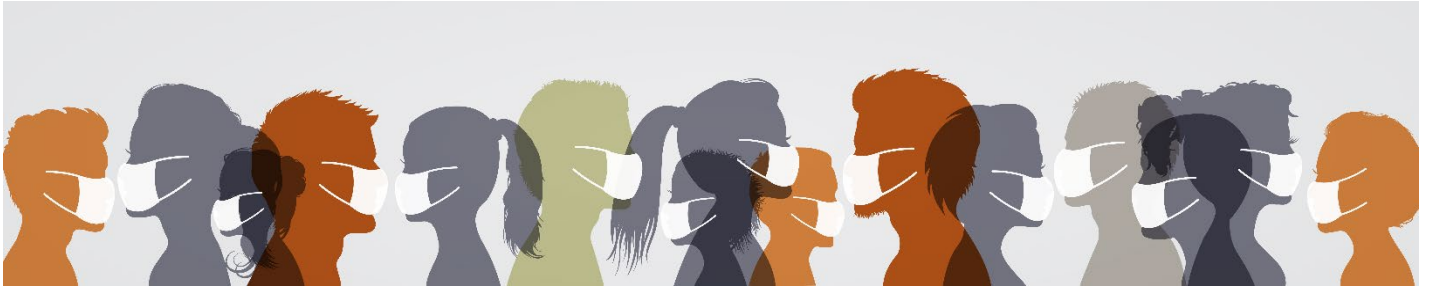
### **Operational Considerations: Implement workplace controls including:**

- **Administrative Controls**
  - Administrative controls require action by the worker or employer. Administrative controls are changes in work policy or procedures to reduce or minimize exposure. Examples of administrative controls for SARS-CoV-2 include:

- **Safety of employees entering the building:**
  - One access point
  - If PPE needs to be distributed, it can also be available at this access point.
  - Are you taking employees' temperature upon entering the building? How will you maintain HIPPA in reference to identification and isolation of a sick employee?
  - Make sure your message/communication is the same for each level of employee, each shift, each site/location.
- **Develop a plan for vendors and partners.**
  - Should they be allowed on site?
  - Do you have protection available for them?
- **Encouraging sick workers to stay at home.**
- **Minimizing contact among workers, clients, and customers.**
  - Replace face-to-face meetings with virtual communications and continuing telework if feasible.
- **Establishing alternating days or extra or staggered shifts.**
  - They reduce the total number of employees in a facility at a given time, allowing them to maintain distance from one another while maintaining a full onsite work week.
- **Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite**
- **Increasing physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive through, partitions)**
- **Discontinuing nonessential travel. Regularly check CDC travel warning levels at: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers)**
- **Developing emergency communications plans, including a forum for answering workers' concerns.**



- **Training workers who need to use protecting clothing and equipment.**
  - How to put it on, use/wear it, and take it off correctly, including in the context of their current and potential duties.
  - Training material should be easy to understand and available in the appropriate language and literacy level for all workers.
  
- **Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and worksite visitors:**
  - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
  - Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
  - Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
  - Place posters that encourage [hand hygiene](#) to [help stop the spread](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
  - Discourage handshaking – encourage the use of other noncontact methods of greeting.
  - Direct employees to visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information.



## **Worker Well-Being Considerations for HR**—Best Practices for Return to Work During COVID-19

### **Determine that the EAP information is visible and accessible to employees.**

- Post hard copy flyers, wallet cards, phone numbers in common areas and lunchrooms
- Utilize your TV monitors to display EAP promotional materials
- Put a link to the EAP website on your benefit page

### **Develop a communication plan to address employee personal concerns and well-being.**

- Utilize informational and promotional materials previously provided by your Account Manager (Links at the bottom)
- Consider surveying employees before they return to work with these two questions: "What are you most excited about/ looking forward in returning to the office?" "What are you most cautious about?" Asking these types of questions lets employees know that leadership is listening to their concerns. As a leadership team, you must then be willing to respond to the questions in a way that makes your employees know they are supported.

- When you communicate with employees, you will be addressing emotions such as anxiety and fear and perhaps anger.
  - Remember to utilize good listening skills
  - Address any workplace changes with a positive spirit
  - Address company expectations
  - Communicate safety precautions and safeguards – now and upon return to work. The more information, clear expectations and procedures shared with employees, the safer and less anxious they will feel with regards to returning to the workplace.
- Be aware that leadership communication strongly affects employee motivation. Has leadership been strong and compassionate in their communication as well as clear and transparent?

#### **Expect resistance to change.**

- There will be varied reasons why some positions will allow for a return to work more quickly than others. This will impact each department, team and individual employee differently depending on how they view change. While some will embrace the return to work, others will view this change as anxiety provoking or frightening. Consider what kind of support the company, Human Resources and Managers/Supervisors can offer their teams, the departments and employees?

#### **Upon returning to work, employees feel more confident when they know the company expectations ahead of time.**

- We all need to stay aware that this is a fluid situation that will require patience and adaptation from HR, leadership and employees. Being clear with employees about what resources and accommodations are available, what to expect and what the workspace will look like upon returning to work will be important. Do not let employees “fill in the blanks.” Clear communication is kind and promotes trust and feeling supported.

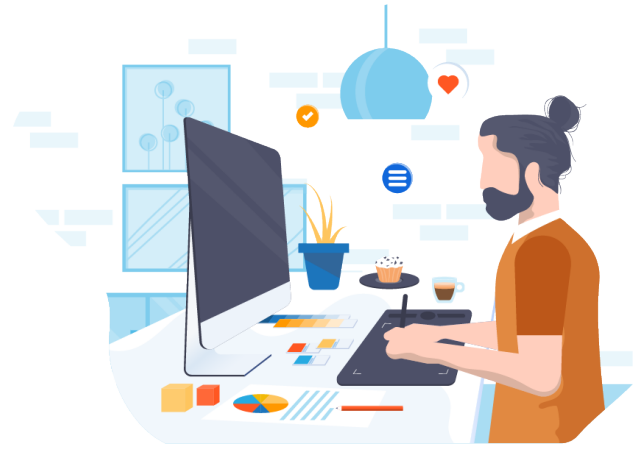
#### **Empower employees to contribute ideas and offer feedback.**

- Do you have a suggestion box, or do you schedule any kind of ‘town hall’ meetings? How are employees able to communicate their concerns and suggestions? If these avenues are in place, it is a good idea to remind people upon their return to work, that they still exist and that employees are encouraged to use these systems.

#### **Since most transitioning will take place in stages, there may continue to be work from home issues – work parameters and expectations will still need to be addressed.**

- Considerations include: Flexibility in allowing employees to work from home 100% OR part time OR with children at home OR with varied hours to help with child/elder care?

- During this transition of returning to work and considering furloughed employees, are there opportunities for those on furlough to participate in trainings, online classes, certification programs, etc., while they are waiting for a previous job duty to be reinstated?



**The current pandemic has affected the mental well-being of everyone.**

- Consider that many employees will be experiencing some level of grief. Consider how you will respond to this grief – and how the company is going to address the following:
  - A family member’s illness or death.
  - Employees who have passed away during this time either to COVID-19 or other health issue.
  - How to address the company’s communication regarding an employee who has passed away, as well as how to deal with their workspace.



**Addressing job loss and job changes– downsizing and furloughs are always sensitive subjects.**

- Consider sensitivity needed as well as efficiency of putting these changes into place.
- Are there any other tasks/jobs an employee could fill which would require minimal training, but could be beneficial to the company as employees transition back to work?
  - Security
  - Checkpoints
  - Information distributing and gathering
  - Employee Relations

**Consider the issue of presenteeism or safety concerns the transitions presents.**

- Employees are not only dealing with the usual work/life stress, but the pandemic brings additional concerns, such as worries about child or elder care, safety concerns, readjusting to a previous routine and travel time. The stress that employees bring back to work need to be considered. Assistance and reminders in reference to work life balance should be reviewed.

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### Be prepared in case of a 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of illness due to COVID-19.

- Think about the following proactively:
  - Knowing what you know, what might you do differently with regards to communication, policy, practice? Do you need to adjust?
  - What might you do similarly? What is working well?
  - Create a plan – this is a risk management consideration.

### Lead by example.

- Leadership should model the appropriate behaviors, safety precautions and honest and transparent communication they would like to see in their teams and direct reports.
- Reinforce and remind employees that the company is concerned with the employees' well-being.

### The Ulliance Website

- More great information on Covid-19 on the Ulliance Corporate site: <https://www.ulliance.com/covid-19-resources-and-tools/>

Hundreds of organizations support their employees through The Ulliance Life Advisor EAP. Ulliance not only provides face-to-face counseling services as part of our EAP benefit, but counseling and coaching services are also just a phone call away!

This allows employees to speak to a counselor or coach on the phone when it's convenient for them, even during evening hours. We can help keep your employees on track to meet their goals, and we're available 24/7!

To find out more about our EAP services, visit [www.ulliance.com](http://www.ulliance.com), or call 866-648-8326.  
Enhancing people. Improving business.