GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS

TO PLAN AND RESPOND TO CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The following guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including the Coronavirus, in non-healthcare settings. The guidance also provides planning considerations if there are more widespread, community outbreaks of the Coronavirus from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This guidance is based on what is currently known **about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**.

All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from the Coronavirus while ensuring continuity of operations. As with all illnesses, sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, use cough and sneeze etiquette, frequently clean hands with soap and water, and routinely clean commonly touched surfaces.

TIPS FOR PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS AT WORK FROM THE CDC

Source: **https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html**

IN ADVANCE OF EMPLOYEES GETTING SICK

- **Determine whether flex working is an option:** Review human resources policies and explore whether you can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours. Supervisors should educate employees that if they become sick they should telework instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved.

- **Create an employee communications plan:** Establish a process to communicate the latest Coronavirus information to employees and business partners (utilize the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Workplace Tips For Employees). Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.

- **Decide how to handle spikes in absenteeism:** In some communities, early childhood programs and K-12 schools may be dismissed, particularly if Coronavirus worsens. Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school.

- **Coordinate with state and local health officials:** Coordination with **state** and **local** health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside. Given the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities. Also, employers should take the time now to learn about plans in place in each community where they have a business by contacting their local public health department.

- **Make a business continuity plan:** Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, consider digital meetings, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).

WHEN EMPLOYEES BECOME SICK

- **Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible**: Consistent with public health guidance, permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member, and that employees are aware of these policies. Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees should notify their supervisor if they are sick and won't be coming into the office.

- **Local decision making:** Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions based on the conditions in each locality.

- **Employee travel:** Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.

- **Separate sick employees:** CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately.

- **Social distancing:** Plan to minimize exposure between healthy employees and also between those employees and the public, if public health officials call for social distancing.

- **Workplace hygiene:** Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by employees before each use.

ADDITIONAL MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS

- **CDC's Traveler's Health Notices:** Check the **latest guidance** and recommendations for each country to which you plan to travel.

- **Outside the United States:** Sick employees should follow your company's policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas. Travel restrictions may be enacted by other countries which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while on travel status.

- **Health confidentiality:** If an employee is confirmed to have the Coronavirus infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to the Coronavirus in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed Coronavirus should refer to CDC guidance for **how to conduct a risk assessment** of their potential exposure.

- **OSHA requirements:** Identify possible work related exposure and health risks to your employees. At the time, there is no specific Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard covering the Coronavirus. However, some OSHA requirements may apply to preventing occupational exposure to the Coronavirus. OSHA has more information on how to **protect workers from potential exposures** to the Coronavirus.