



# Returning to Work Post-COVID-19

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# Purpose of Presentation



This presentation is designed to:

- Educate employers on best practices for returning to work as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic flattens out and temporary laws, guidelines and restrictions are lifted.
- Prepare employers on how to mitigate risks, and establish best practices for working in a post-coronavirus workplace.
- Provide appropriate and accurate resources for employers regarding COVID-19, and employee health and wellness.

# Topics



- Returning to Work
- Workplace Changes
- Behavioral Changes
- Cleaning Practices
- Masks and Face Coverings
- Signs & Symptoms of COVID-19
- COVID-19 Screenings
- Response to Employees Who Have Symptoms
- Responding to an Employee's Positive Coronavirus Test
- Additional Return to Work Considerations
- Health and Wellness Resources
- Other Resources
- Contact Information

# Returning to Work



The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has changed many aspects of the current workplace. As employers prepare best return to work practices, there are various considerations.

These include topics such as:

- Updated workplace layouts
- Social distancing measures and behavioral changes
- Education on common COVID-19 symptoms, and planned responses to COVID-19 related symptoms and positive tests
- Updates to cleaning procedures
- Use of masks and face coverings
- Role, organization and industry-specific topics
- Creating plans for future pandemics

By proactively putting plans in place for relevant topics, employers can help prevent the spread of future diseases and protect the health and safety of employees.

# Updated Workplace Layouts



As employees begin to return to work, employers may want to begin by considering updates to physical workplaces post-coronavirus. These updates may include:

- **Create a walk-traffic flow that discourages congestion.** Encourage employees to navigate the workplace in specific directions, such as a counterclockwise walk-traffic flow or creating pedestrian lanes which can help prevent congestion and promote social distancing.
- **Increasing each employee's personal space.** By ensuring workstations are 6 feet or more apart, employees can properly social distance while completing everyday duties.
- **Create walls and barriers.** Discourage the spread of air particles by creating physical barriers between employees.
- **Update air-filtration systems.** Air pollutants such as bacteria and germs can build up quickly indoors—effective air ventilation systems can flush out bad air and keep indoor air clean.
- **Install no-touch soap dispensers, sinks and paper towel dispensers in bathrooms.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 can remain on hard surfaces for up to 12 hours. While employees are being encouraged to wash their hands often, installing no-touch technology can reduce the number of surfaces that are being touched by employees.
- **Install automatic doors.** Door handles are frequently touched surfaces, and automatic doors can reduce the spread of COVID-19.

# Behavioral Changes



## Employee Expectations

When returning to work, it is important that employers create updated expectations of behaviors by employees. While every business is different, there are standard practices employers can consider implementing within the workplace. Common adjustments include:

- **Create expectations for hand-washing.** According to the CDC, one of the best actions to prevent spreading of coronaviruses is by washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Encourage employees to wash their hands often, and consider creating policies to reinforce this behavior.
- **Ban or discourage shaking of hands.** While shaking hands is an instinct in many cases, this practice can spread germs, diseases and illnesses at an expedited rate.
- **Adjust meeting practices.** Encourage limited participants in meetings, advise them to spread out and avoid shared multi-touch devices.
- **Restrict unnecessary business travel.** Reducing travel can reduce the risk of COVID-19 being transmitted—define what types of business travel are acceptable.

# Behavioral Changes



## Technology Considerations for Employers

Beyond updating office layouts and encouraging virus-resistant practices, many employers are considering how the use of technology can aid in efforts to prevent the spread of diseases. Technology considerations include:

- **Tracking employees' distances.** Some employers are tracking employees' distances with cellphones and other electronic devices, to ensure that social distancing practices are being followed.
- **Using hands-free technology.** Employers can also consider installing or expanding the use of hands-free voice assistants, such as Amazon, Google or Apple devices, with the intent of reducing the use of shared technology surfaces used by multiple employees.

While these specific practices won't make sense or be feasible for all organizations, employers can consider how the use of technology can encourage social distancing, and reduce the use of shared surfaces—both during and even after the COVID-19 pandemic. Practices such as using technology to track employees may have varying legal requirements and implications—when considering practices involving technology, employers should consult with local legal counsel before implementing any policies or changes.

# Cleaning Practices



## Updating Cleaning Practices

Evaluating and updating ongoing cleaning practices can help ensure that COVID-19 isn't lingering in the air or on surfaces. Employers can consider how updated cleaning practices can help prevent the spread of COVID-19. These may include:

- Increasing the frequency of cleaning routines, and ensuring routines include multi-touch surfaces and devices
- Ensuring that cleaning routines include use of disinfectants
- Increasing access of cleaning supplies to employees, such as hand sanitizer, sanitizer wipes and more



# Masks and Face Coverings



## Masks and Face Coverings Overview

The CDC currently recommends wearing face coverings in public. In alignment with this guidance, many employers are expanding personal protective equipment to include masks or face coverings:

- **What is the difference between masks and face coverings?** A face covering refers to a cloth covering of the face, and is not a medical-grade mask. Masks refer to filtering respirators, such as an N95, K95, medical-grade or surgical mask. Masks are considered critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for health care workers and other medical first responders. Employers should review updated local guidelines to establish whether masks or face coverings are appropriate for their employees.
- **Benefits of masks and face coverings.** Studies show that people with minimal or no symptoms can still have COVID-19. According to the CDC, while wearing face coverings shouldn't replace social distancing, face coverings can help prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

Guidelines vary based on location and industry—and some employers are required to provide face coverings to employees. Employers should check with local guidelines and laws regarding face coverings, and seek legal counsel when implementing any policies or changes.

# Masks and Face Coverings, Cont.



## Using Masks in the Workplace

According to CDC guidance, masks are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for health care workers and other medical first responders. Unless providing critical services in one of these professions, most employers will want to consider using cloth face coverings rather than masks. However, for appropriate organizations, employers may want to consider best practices for use of masks:

- **Ensure a supply of masks is available.** Due to current circumstances, employers should communicate with local governments regarding availability and use of masks.
- **Communicate expectations to employees.** Though masks such as N95s are not new to professions such as health care, employers should ensure that all employees are aware of any updates and current best practices.
- **Masks do not replace social distancing.** While masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, employees should understand that this does not diminish the importance of social distancing.

# Masks and Face Coverings, Cont.



## Using Face Coverings in the Workplace

For many employers, cloth face coverings will be an appropriate option. To implement face coverings, employers should consider the following best practices:

- **Create specific policies.** Employers should have policies and practices in place for unique situations related to face coverings. Examples may include:
  - An employee who objects to wearing a face covering
  - An employee who loses his or her face covering
  - An employee who is unable to wear face coverings due to a medical condition
- **Communicate expectations to all employees.** Employers should communicate policy updates related to face coverings to all employees. This may include posting notices. Communications should cover topics such as whether face coverings are optional or mandatory, who will be providing them and how they will be washed.
- **Ensure face coverings are washed daily.** According to the CDC, washing face coverings in a washing machine should properly clean them.
- **Implement a training program.** To ensure face coverings are used properly, employers should create a training program for employees on how to best use face coverings.

# Masks and Face Coverings, Cont.



## Effective Face Coverings, and Where to Get Them

The CDC lists guidelines for effective cloth face coverings, which include the following characteristics:

- A tight fit but comfortable on the face, allowing for breathing without restriction
- Secured with ties or ear loops
- Includes multiple layers of durable fabric, able to withstand washing for reuse
- Allows for breathing without restriction

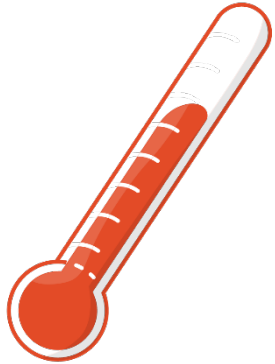
Who pays for and supplies these masks? In some states and industries, employers are required to pay for and provide face coverings. In other circumstances, employers have flexibility as they establish best practices. Employers should check with local guidelines and laws, and seek legal counsel to ensure compliance with the most up-to-date guidelines.

For employers that are seeking face masks, they can often be made in-house or, in some cases, purchased. The CDC provides [procedures](#) for how face coverings can be made.

Depending on local guidelines, employers may be required to provide face coverings to employees. However, some employers are able to request that employees use their own. If so, employers may want to consider reimbursement programs.

# Signs & Symptoms of COVID-19

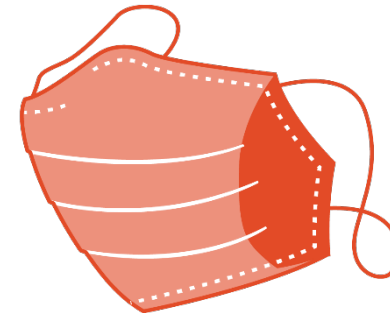
According to the CDC, COVID-19 can have a wide range of symptoms. These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after an individual contracts the virus. These symptoms include:



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

Individuals should seek immediate medical attention if they display the following advanced symptoms:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face



# COVID-19 Screenings



## Screening Employees for COVID-19 in the Workplace

According to [guidance](#) from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), employers may choose to screen employees for COVID-19. As with any mandatory medical test, screenings must be job-related and consistent with business necessity. To ensure compliance, considerations for employers include:

- Any screenings must be conducted on a nondiscriminatory basis—for example, this may mean screening **all** employees entering a facility or work location.
- Test results should be treated as confidential medical records, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Communications related to screenings should be delivered to all employees, including details of what screening practices will entail, expectations of employees and assurance that all screening will be completed in compliance with regulatory laws.

# COVID-19 Screenings, Cont.

## Conducting Screenings

Standard practices for screenings may include screening of employees as they enter a work area. Screenings may include:

- General screening questions
- Assessment of COVID-19-related symptoms
- Taking the temperature of the employee
  - Temperatures should be taken using a sanitary, no-touch thermometer.
  - According to the CDC, temperatures over 100.4 F are consistent with COVID-19 related symptoms.



# Response to Employees Who Have Symptoms



Employers should have specific practices in place to respond to employees who have symptoms.

- **Advise employees to report symptoms immediately.** Employees should be advised to report symptoms through phone or digital communication channels, if at all possible. Reassure the employee that their identity will remain confidential, and be sure to help them coordinate taking leave or paid time off in the event they require isolation.
- **Employee should be evaluated for COVID-19.** Ensure that any individuals coming within 6 feet of a employee reporting systems is wearing appropriate PPE.
- **Isolate employees who are suspected of having COVID-19.** If human resources, safety or designated professionals conclude the employee is likely to have contracted COVID-19, employers should plan a COVID-19 test, and begin to have the employee self-quarantine. Employers should then prepare for a positive COVID-19 test response, if necessary.



# Responding to an Employee's Positive Coronavirus Test



Should an employee test positive for COVID-19, employers should have a specific plan in place to respond. Next steps should include:

- Responding directly to the employee
- Isolating the employee
- Notifying employees, customers, vendors and guests
- Disinfecting appropriate work areas

# Responding to an Employee's Positive Coronavirus Test, Cont.



## Respond Directly to the Employee

- After a positive test, employers should address the affected employee calmly and empathetically.
- In these uncertain times, it can be easy to overreact. Reassure the employee that their identity will remain confidential, and be sure to help them coordinate taking leave or paid time off until they've recovered.
- You will also need to ask the employee some potentially difficult questions, including with whom the employee has been in contact within the last two weeks.
- Obtaining this information is essential so that you can directly notify customers and other employees that they may have been directly exposed to COVID-19.

# Responding to an Employee's Positive Coronavirus Test, Cont.



## Isolating the Employee

According to the CDC, employees who have COVID-19 should go into isolation immediately. Isolation should continue until the following conditions are met.

For employees who **are not** being tested for COVID-19, isolation should continue until the following three conditions are met:

1. 72 hours of no fevers, without assistance of fever reducing medicines
2. Other symptoms have improved
3. At least seven days have passed since initial symptoms

For employees who **are** being tested for COVID-19 isolation should continue until the following three conditions are met:

1. No current fever, without assistance of fever reducing medicines
2. Other symptoms have improved
3. Two tests have come back negative, with at least 24 hours between tests

Employers should follow guidance of a health care provider, and their local health department | when making any determinations. Decisions may be impacted by local or specific circumstances.

# Responding to an Employee's Positive Coronavirus Test, Cont.



## Notify Employees, Customers, Vendors and Guests

- Recommend the employee self-quarantine for the next 14 days, and monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Directly notify any co-workers or customers with whom the ill employee had been in contact.
- Make determinations on who should be self-isolating.
- Be sure to notify the rest of the company by email or letter that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19. Remember to keep the employee's identity protected and be transparent about your response.
- Communications should include what steps your company will be taking to protect the health of other employees.
- If feasible, allow eligible employees to work from home during this time.
- If you plan on having employees work from home for the next 14 days or closing the office, this information should be disclosed in the communication.

# Responding to an Employee's Positive Coronavirus Test, Cont.

## Closing Down the Workplace for Cleaning

According to the CDC, COVID-19 can remain on hard surfaces for up to 12 hours.

- You may want to consider closing the office for a few days so that it can be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- If necessary, evacuate the workplace for up to 72 hours, and advise employees who are able to work remotely.
- If the employee has not been in the office for seven days or more, additional cleaning may not be required to supplement standard cleaning procedures.



# Responding to an Employee's Positive Coronavirus Test, Cont.

## How to Clean and Disinfect After a Positive Test

The CDC provides best practices for [cleaning and disinfecting your facility](#) after a positive coronavirus case. These steps include:

- Close off all areas visited by the person, and open windows and use ventilating fans with airflow—after opening up the airflow, then wait 24 hours before beginning cleaning.
- After 24 hours, cleaning staff should then disinfect all areas and equipment used by the person.

According to the CDC, COVID-19 can remain on hard surfaces for up to 12 hours. They outline the best steps for cleaning are as follows:

- Ensure all cleaning staff are using personal protective equipment. These may include:
  - a. Gloves
  - b. Gowns
  - c. Face Coverings
- Begin by cleaning surfaces using soap and water.
- After surfaces are clean, apply disinfectant. The Environmental Protection Agency list appropriate [disinfectants](#) for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- For soft surfaces, best cleaning practices are similar to those of surfaces—however, you can clean by laundering if possible. If not an option, continue to cleaning with a [disinfectant](#).
- For any laundry, clean according to the manufacturers' instructions, and use the warmest possible water setting before drying items completely.
- For electronics, clean according to the manufacturers' instructions. If no guidance is available, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol, before drying completely.
- Once employees return, continue routine cleaning and disinfecting.

# Additional Return to Work Considerations



## Remote Work

Studies show that that many employees can be equally, if not more, productive when working remotely. While the feasibility of remote work varies depending on an employee's job responsibilities, expanding remote work options can offer various benefits. These benefits can include:

- Increased flexibility
- Increased retention
- Reduced greenhouse emissions
- The ability to tap into a broader talent pool
- Fewer opportunities for diseases such as coronaviruses to spread

Notably, by expanding remote opportunities post-coronavirus, employers can reduce the amount of human interaction that takes place at a physical location. Also, by allowing remote work, employees who are sick are less likely to physically attend the office. Best practices for expanding remote work include creating outlined companywide remote practices, rather than leaving remote work approval requests up to the subjective opinion of a manager. If considering the expansions of remote work, contact [B\_Officialname] for additional resources on best utilizing the remote workspace.

# Additional Return to Work Considerations, Cont.



## Completing Form I-9

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many employers have been challenged with unique onboarding challenges. As employees return to work, ensure that all loose ends are completed. Specifically for Form I-9, ensure that all requirements have been satisfied.

In response to COVID-19, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced [flexibility in requirements](#) related to Form I-9 compliance. Temporarily, employers have had the option of reviewing the employee's identity and employment authorization documents either in the employee's physical presence or virtually. Employers may choose to inspect necessary documents remotely, through email, fax or video. If reviewing documents remotely, employers will then be required to review the physical documents once the temporary flexibility is lifted. As employees return to work, employers should ensure they complete the following steps:

- **Complete physical verification of I-9 documents.** Once temporary flexibility is lifted, employers will be required to verify documents for any employees who have not had their supporting documents physically verified.
- **Complete Form I-9.** Once documents have been verified, employers have the following options:
  - Complete Section 3 of the Form I-9.
  - Have employee complete Section 1, and employer completes Section 2 of a new Form I-9.



# Additional Return to Work Considerations, Cont.



## Plan for Future Pandemics

While employers plan their return to work practices, consideration should be made for future pandemics. Even after reopening, health experts warn that businesses should also be prepared for additional waves of COVID-19 in the future. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, when creating COVID-19-related return to work plans, employers may want to consider the following:

- **Business continuity plans.** For organizations that did not have a plan in place for the COVID-19 pandemic, return to work allows an opportunity for planning ahead for future pandemics and business disruptions.
- **Policy changes.** Considerations from this presentation may impact future policy changes, which employers can present to employees to reestablish best practices in the workplace. Policy changes may involve topics such as safety, remote work options and more.
- **Strategic communication strategies.** Most workplaces have gone through significant changes, and that trend will likely continue. Effective communication plans can keep employees informed, engaged and assured that you are taking appropriate steps as an employer.

# Health and Wellness Resources

For health and wellness resources, employers should review guidelines from the CDC:

- [Stress and Coping](#)
- [Prevent Getting Sick](#)
- [If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone](#)

Here at [B\_Officialname], some of the best health and wellness resources we recommend include:

- [Insert text]
- [Insert text]

For additional health and wellness resources not listed, contact [B\_Officialname]—we're here to help.



# Other Resources



For updates related to COVID-19, employers are encouraged to follow updates from the CDC and OSHA. Resources include:

- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [OSHA Guidance for Employers](#)
- Specific guidelines exist for industries such as health care, laboratories, transportation and more. For specifics, employers can access up-to-date information from the [CDC's Coronavirus Disease-2019 Resource](#).

Contact The Flanders Group if you need additional resources at 800-462-6435 or visit the COVID-19 section of our website at [www.flandersgroup.com](http://www.flandersgroup.com)