HUMAN CAPITAL HC
Strategic HR Solutions — associates

COVID-19 BACK-TO-WORK CHECKLIST

As Employers, you are faced with unprecedented workplace challenges in response to COVID-19. This checklist provides an opportunity to respond to a multitude of considerations, both short- and long-term. Though comprehensive and current as of early-May 2020, employer and workplace considerations are not solely limited to this list, and they are expected to change and evolve over time.

1) **COMMUNICATION AND PLANNING –** employers should establish a clear communication plan will allow employees, customers, vendors and stakeholders to understand how the organization plans to reopen or reestablish business processes.
   Several considerations include:

   ☐ Developing a written plan of action to implement if a worker becomes sick with COVID-19; having exposure-response communications ready to go to any affected employees and customers.

   ☐ Reviewing or adopting an emergency preparedness policy; communicating with employees about safety precautions and procedures to follow in the event of various scenarios.

   ☐ Sharing details of trainings offered on new workplace safety and disinfection protocols have been implemented.

   ☐ Preparing media communications for release on topics such as return-to-work timetables, safety protections in place, and how else the company is supporting workers and customers.

2) **WORKPLACE SAFETY –** employers should ensure the workplaces is as safe as possible, as employees and customers likely have fears of returning to business as usual.
   Several considerations include:

   ☐ Encouraging employees to check for symptoms, and to stay home when not feeling well.

   ☐ Developing an exposure-response plan that addresses:
   - o Isolation, containment and contact tracking procedures.
   - o Stay-at-home requirements.
   - o Exposure communications to affected staff.

   ☐ Implementing employee health screening procedures, such as:
   - o Daily health questionnaires.
   - o Temperature-taking prior to starting workday.

   ☐ Providing personal protective equipment (PPE), such as:
   - o Masks, gloves, face shields and personal hand sanitizer.

   ☐ Performing routine environmental cleanings of office, including high-touch surfaces.

   ☐ To the extent possible, implementing physical distancing measures within the workplace:
   - o Staggered shifts and lunch/rest breaks.
   - o Rotating weeks in the office and working remotely.
   - o Moving workstations to increase separation distance.
   - o Implementing one-way traffic patterns throughout workplace.

☐ Restricting business travel:
- o   Start with essential travel only and define what that is.
- o   Follow government guidance to ease restrictions over time.

☐ Defining customer and visitor contact protocols such as:
- o   Directing customer traffic through workplace.
- o   Limiting the number of customers in any area at one time.
- o   No handshake greetings and remaining six feet apart.
- o   Utilizing video or telephone conferencing, as opposed to in-person client meetings.
- o   Providing contactless pickup and delivery of products.

☐ Understanding and complying with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) record-keeping and reporting obligations:
- o   Identifying any positions with potential occupational exposure to the coronavirus.
- o   Reviewing applicable OSHA (and state OSHA) and CDC standards, including OSHA's *"Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-10."*

3) **EMPLOYEE RECALL –** employers should plan for how and when employees will return to work and create a controlled approach, as employees returning on the same day may be overwhelming and unsafe.
Several considerations include:

☐ Requesting self-quarantine or mandatory quarantine pursuant to CDC guidelines, for any employee who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, including any quarantine/isolation orders from federal, state and local health agencies.

☐ Considering a medical clearance requirement from a doctor prior to a quarantined employee returns to the workplace; or, consider requiring employees be completely symptom-free and past the incubation period prior to returning.

☐ Considering a phasing-in of employees returning to work:
- o   Use seniority or other nondiscriminatory factors for selection.
- o   Adopting a work-share program, if bringing employees back on a reduced schedule.
- o   Determining schedule changes to provide the greatest protection to workers.

☐ Creating a plan for employees in high-risk categories for infection to return to work:
- o   Determining increased measures to protect them when working onsite, including isolated workstations, additional PPE as requested, fewer days in the office, etc.

☐ Notifying the state unemployment agency of employees recalled to work, a state requirement; this will also save on unemployment taxes for those who choose not to return to work.

4) **REMOTE WORK –** employers should leverage telework as both a short-term emergency tool, as well as a permanent option should be considered, when possible.
Several considerations include:

☐ Creating or reviewing telework policy; evaluating workforce to determine which jobs can be performed remotely and which cannot.

☐ Staggering weeks in office and at home among team members, or part-time remote work on alternate weekdays.

☐ Continually updating technology to support virtual employees.

☐ Considering the long-term cost savings or impact of offering permanent remote work.

5) COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS – many changes in compensation and benefits have occurred throughout the pandemic thus far; employers should clearly communicate any disruption or change to employees.

Several considerations include:

☐ Compensation

- o How the employer will handle any missed annual pay increases and if those will be applied retroactively.
- o Will any pay cuts be made or revoked? Understand how to reduce salaries for exempt employees if necessary.
- o Determining if employee status changes – exempt to nonexempt or full- to part-time status – are needed to reopen or if those already made will continue.
- o How will bonuses be affected, including eligibility for or continuation of, etc.
- o Will hazard pay be offered or revoked?
- o It may be a good time to consider a pay equity audit as workers return, as pay may have been reduced or frozen and may have impacted women differently

☐ Group Health Insurance

- o Determine any eligibility or waiting-period issues due to leave or reinstatement; reviewing any revised eligibility requirements during the layoff or furlough and determining if those changes will be revoked and when.
- o Ensuring coverage changes, such as adding telehealth benefits, and services now not subject to deductibles have been incorporated into the plan.

☐ Flexible spending accounts

- o Addressing new flexible spending account elections and allowable changes with employees.

☐ 401(k) and Pension Plans

- o Review eligibility issues due to layoff or furlough.
- o Consider any break in service issues or counting years of service concerns.
- o Review any in-service loans employees may have or will want to take, including eligibility and pay back procedures.

☐ Paid leave

- o Assessing sick leave and medical leave policies related to new legislation, including the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA); ensuring employees understand the eligibility requirements and provide them with a policy.
- o Determining a way to track each employee's use of leave, including the duration and reasons for leave; collect any supporting documentation for tax credit purposes.
- o Determining if there will be company PTO policy changes, including increasing or decreasing paid leave benefits, or additional restrictions in using paid leave.
- o Understanding the coordination of leave benefits and communicating these to employees as needed.

6) **POLICY CHANGES** – employers should update and create policies to reflect the "new normal." *Several considerations include:*

- ☐ Paid-leave policies adjusted to reflect regulatory requirements and business needs.

- ☐ Relaxed attendance policies to encourage sick employees to remain at home.

- ☐ Time-off request procedures clarified to indicate when time off can be required by the employer, should sick employees need to be sent home.

- ☐ Flexible scheduling options implemented allowing for compressed workweeks and flexible start and stop times.

- ☐ Meal and break policies adjusted to stagger times and processes implemented to encourage physical distancing.

- ☐ Travel policies updated to reflect essential versus nonessential travel and the impact of domestic or global travel restrictions.

- ☐ Remote work policies detailed to reflect the type of work that can be done remotely and the procedures for requesting telework.

- ☐ Information technology policies revised to reflect remote work hardware, software and support.

7) **BUSINESS CONTINUITY –** employers should revise or create a business continuity plan in preparation for future crises. *Several considerations include:*

- ☐ Implementing a business continuity plan which includes infectious disease control; or, amending an existing plan to include emergency information, such as updates on epidemics, workplace considerations and changes in protocols for responding to global disasters.

- ☐ Updating plan resources and contact information to ensure accuracy.

- ☐ Establishing a pandemic task force or committee to continuously monitor external and internal data and implement appropriate protocols. Recognizing the possibility of additional closings during this current pandemic as COVID-19 infections may rise and fall again, triggering more stay-at-home orders and supply chain disruptions.

- ☐ Performing testing and exercises to practice emergency plans and ensure employees know what to do; also, using this as an opportunity to address any gaps prior to another emergency.

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