Total Worker Health® Employer Guide COVID-19 Edition

Frequently Asked Questions
Click on the blue text below to access additional resources.

Worker Well-being

Q: *How do we help employees cope with the psychological impact of the constant uncertainty?*

A: It is important to be transparent; share what are the knowns and unknowns. Anticipate changes and offer communications on a weekly basis about what is known and not known. Recognize that people will experience stress in different ways and their ways of coping may differ. Additional strategies are found in the Worker Well Being/Mental Health section of the guide.

Q: *How do you deal with people who are simply afraid to return to the workplace - no underlying conditions or childcare issues?*

A: Have employees work with HR to discuss the process to determine accommodation eligibility and available mental health support. See Employer Guide/Worker Well-Being/Mental Health. Employers should also speak with their legal counsel about accommodation eligibility for employees.

Remote Worker Hazards

Q: *Because employees are working from various desk levels and their mouse may be at unusual heights or using a laptop mouse for the first time, what type of checklists would you suggest?*

A: There is a link to the remote worker work-station adjustment guide.

Q: *Given we know that temperatures are not elevated in all COVID cases, any suggestions on what other than that we should use to determine who and who should not come to work because they are high risk?*

A: It is considered lawful to assess temperature as well as the primary risk factors for COVID 19 among employees. Employers may consider screening employees for relevant respiratory symptoms and exposure risks, such as travel history or contact with ill people. Employees may be asked to remain home until cleared by a physician if they exhibit any of the symptoms. See the Screening and Reporting information in the section on Essential Workers.

Q: *What are some recommendations for steps to take when there is a positive case in your workplace?*

A: Follow guidance from CDC and local health departments for isolation after known exposure. Implement a workplace policy that is consistent with these recommendations. Policies should include reporting protocols, confidentiality procedures, and return to work practices. See screening and reporting in the guide.

Q: *What are testing options for employers right now?*

A: At this time, the availability of virus testing is limited, and supply has been prioritized for high-risk patients and health care or other essential workers that may increase transmission. Antibody test are becoming available on the market, but the validity of results and FDA approval is still lacking for many. Assess the availability of virus and antibody testing through local public health offices and seek CDC recommendations on if such tests should be used to confirm employee health status. See Employer Guide/Return-To-Work Guideline/Considerations for links regarding virus and antibody testing.

Q: *How do I help employees who need to return to work and are struggling with childcare?*

A: Consider offering flexibility in schedules and allowing these employees to continue to work from home, at least part-time. Identify potential childcare resources in your local area and make this information available.

Q: *How do you manage equity and risk to discrimination for selecting who gets to work remote and who returns to the office?*

A: Employers should speak with their legal counsel about accommodation eligibility for employees. A fair and equitable process should be used to determine who is eligible to work from home.