

Our Top 10 Considerations for your Return to Work Plan

1. Develop your own plan. Based on these new orders and our new environment, we recommend you develop your own Return to Work Plan. Most importantly, make it your plan that meets your specific needs. The state and local orders are general and provide minimum timelines and restrictions. Establish target dates for employees to return to work, customer interaction and full return of staff based on current guidelines and restrictions. Some essential businesses have already been working, some non-essential businesses will return to work, but *all businesses and individuals need to develop their own timelines and a written plan.*

2. Determine if you will open all at once or gradually. Much has changed since March. Daycare, unemployment compensation, health conditions, consumer behavior and uncertainty make full employment and operations extremely challenging. If possible, consider an initial period of flexibility allowing parents to figure out daycare, folks with health conditions to determine their plans and how you'll ramp up operations. Stagger people in shifts such as Monday/Tuesday and Thursday/Friday, if applicable.

3. Set standards for physical distancing. Develop a plan that includes standards for office public areas, restrooms and open spaces. Some businesses may need to tape "personal distancing" areas where people queue up or congregate. Reception or customer service areas may need plexiglass barriers to limit close interaction. Personal service businesses like hair salons will be required to wear masks, which includes customers since the 6-foot distance standard can't be met.

4. Establish rigorous cleaning and sanitizing protocols. Set up sanitizing stations at entryways, common areas and restrooms. Ask your cleaning crew to stock up on necessary supplies. Establish a formal schedule for cleaning each day. Ask employees to participate in sanitizing their own space in addition to your standard protocol. Promote personal hygiene and post in common areas.

5. Determine your protocol on protective equipment and wearing masks. Will it be mandatory, or will you encourage their use? Will you supply them or allow people to wear their own? Will you require suppliers, maintenance, visitors or customers to wear them? Every business is different; however, some personal service businesses will be required to wear masks and other protective equipment.



6. Minimize travel. Set standards on business and personal travel. What is the allowable radius to vacation? Will self-quarantines be required afterward?

7. Develop an infectious disease preparedness and response plan. Prevent employees with fevers, coughs or illness from reporting to work. Establish a “no penalty” policy for illness or be more flexible regarding working from home when feeling “under the weather” if feasible. If someone is feeling sick, send them home immediately. Consider workforce contact tracing for positive COVID-19 cases, if applicable.

8. Develop a separate timeline and standards for visitors and customers. Many businesses will be restricted by state and local orders. Some businesses will wait weeks or even months before interaction will be in person again. A phased in approach could be considered. A time frame for suppliers and maintenance. Another time period for customers and restrictions on family or guests.

9. Consider if you’ll require the taking of temperatures, questions on exposure and if you’ll require written logs and protocols. Please consult an HR or legal professional on this area for privacy, HIPAA, and other standards. One approach is to ask employees to follow CDC guidelines, another is to allow employees to take their temperature at home, complete a questionnaire and log it each day. Another strategy is taking temperatures at work with exposure questions. We do recommend that you establish some type of process with the help of professionals. Also, consider what standards you’ll have for guests, customers, and suppliers.

10. Develop a strategy on how you’ll handle employees who refuse to return to work. Lack of childcare, unemployment compensation and potential health concerns complicate this issue immensely. We favor a gradual, flexible approach with consistent application. Consider returning to work in phases where allowances for working from home are possible. There will be disruption in our workforce. Consult an HR or legal professional as this will be difficult.

