

## CHECKLIST #29

## STRATEGIES TO MINIMIZE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE ABSENTEEISM

- Plan for ill individuals to remain at home. Encourage ill persons to stay home and establish return-to-work policies after illness.
- Identify critical job functions and plan for their continuity, such as temporarily suspend non-critical activities, cross-train employees to cover critical functions, and cover the most critical functions with fewer staff.
- Identify employees who might need extra assistance to stay home when they are ill because, for example, they live alone or have a disability.
- Review Federal and State employment laws that identify your employer obligations and options for employees.
- Establish and clearly communicate policies on sick (and other) leave and employee compensation.
- Develop a workplace culture that recognizes and encourages behaviors such as voluntarily staying home when ill in order to recover and to avoid spreading infection to others.
- Develop policies on what to do when a person becomes ill at the workplace.
- Provide employees with information on taking care of ill people at home. Such information will be posted on [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).
- Establish policies for an alternate or flexible worksite (e.g., work via the internet, e-mailed or mailed work assignments) and flexible work hours, where feasible.
- Develop guidelines to address business continuity requirements created by jobs that will not allow teleworking (e.g., production or assembly line workers).
- Establish and clearly communicate policies on family leave and employee compensation, especially Federal laws and laws in your State regarding leave of workers who need to care for an ill family member or voluntarily remain home.
- Plan for dismissal of students and childcare closure.
- Identify employees who may need to stay home if schools dismiss students and childcare programs close during a severe pandemic.
- Plan for alternative staffing or staffing schedules on the basis of your identification of employees who may need to stay home.
- Identify critical job functions and plan now for cross-training employees to cover those functions in case of prolonged absenteeism during a pandemic.
- Establish policies for employees with children to work from home, if possible, and consider flexible work hours and schedules (e.g., staggered shifts).
- Encourage employees who have children in their household to make plans to care for their children if officials recommend dismissal of students from schools, colleges, universities, and childcare programs. Advise employees to plan for an extended period (up to 12 weeks) in case the pandemic is severe.
- In a severe pandemic, parents would be advised to protect their children by reducing out-of-school social contacts and mixing with other children. Although limiting all outside contact may not be feasible, parents may be able to develop support systems with co-workers, friends, families, or neighbors if they continue to need childcare. For example, they could prepare a plan in which two to three families work together to supervise and provide care for a small group of infants and young children while their parents are at work (studies suggest that childcare group size of less than six children may be associated with fewer respiratory infections). Talk with your employees about any benefits, programs, or other assistance they may be eligible for if they have to stay home to mind children for a prolonged period during a pandemic.
- Coordinate with State and local government and faith-based and community-based organizations to assist workers who cannot report to work for a prolonged period.
- Plan for workplace and community social distancing measures.
- Become familiar with social distancing methods that may be used during a pandemic to modify the frequency and type of person-to-person contact (**e.g., reducing hand-shaking, limiting face-to-face meetings and shared workstations, promoting teleworking, offering liberal/unscheduled leave policies, staggered shifts**).
- Plan to operate businesses and other workplaces using social distancing and other measures to minimize close contact

between and among employees and customers. Determine how the work environment may be reconfigured to allow for more distance between employees and between employees and customers during a pandemic. If social distancing is not feasible in some work settings, employ other protective measures (guidance available at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)).

- Review and implement guidance from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to adopt appropriate work practices and precautions to protect employees from occupational exposure to influenza virus during a pandemic. Risk of occupational exposure to influenza virus depends in part on whether or not jobs require close proximity to people potentially infected with the pandemic influenza virus or whether employees are required to have either repeated or extended contact with the public. OSHA will post and periodically update such guidance on [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).
- Encourage good hygiene at the workplace. Provide employees and staff with information about the importance of hand hygiene (information can be found at [www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/](http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/)) as well as convenient access to soap and water and/or alcohol-based hand gel in your facility. Educate employees about covering their cough to prevent the spread of germs ([www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm)).
- Communicate with your employees and staff. Disseminate your company's pandemic plan to all employees and stakeholders in advance of a pandemic; include roles/actions expected of employees and other stakeholders during implementation of the plan.
- Provide information to encourage employees (and their families) to prepare for a pandemic by providing preparedness information. Resources are available at [www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/checklist.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/checklist.html).
- Help your community. Coordinate your business' pandemic plans and actions with local health and community planning.
- Find volunteers in your business who want to help people in need, such as elderly neighbors, single parents of small children, or people without the resources to get the medical or other help they will need.
- Think of ways your business can reach out to other businesses and others in your community to help them plan for a pandemic. Participate in community-wide exercises to enhance pandemic preparedness.
- Assess criteria that need to be met to resume normal operations and provide notification to employees of activation of the business resumption plan.
- Assess the availability of medical, mental health, and social services for employees after the pandemic.