

Medical/Sick Leave Challenges and Questions

COVID-19 creates complex medical and human resources challenges that should be discussed in advance with qualified personnel.

Every business knows the importance of treating medical information about their employees with the greatest confidence. One of the challenges presented by COVID-19 is the need to respect that privacy while at the same time providing important information to coworkers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) addresses this issue and many others in this guidance to employers:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html?>

Each company will need to consult the appropriate HR, medical and legal advisors to answer these questions in light of COVID-19:

- What information do we need to provide to employees about the symptoms of this illness?
How will we provide it?
- Do managers have any obligation to look for symptoms?
- What is our position on masks? Are they required, optional or discouraged?
- Who will supply masks to whom? Who will train staff on their appropriate fitting and use?
- Are any of our employees traveling to the impacted areas?
- What would we do if one of our employees fell ill while traveling?
- Who is the person who should be informed of such an issue?
- What do we do if we learn an employee tests positive?
- How do we contact coworkers about the risks?
- How do people report if they are ill? To whom?
- How will we keep the ill employees' names confidential?
- Can we send home employees we suspect are sick?
- How will we encourage people to go home if they feel sick?
- What will part-time employees who are sent home be paid?
- Can we request an employee take a medical examination?
- What is the advice of the government on these issues?
- What is our response if an employee with no symptoms is afraid to come to work?
- What issues do we have to consider with pregnant workers?
- Are any disabled employees at additional risk?

Addressing these questions with experts and company advisors can provide your managers and employees with a clear sense of how they should handle some of the medical challenges every flu season presents but are intensified with COVID-19.