EmPower HR

COVID-19 Return to Work Checklist

EmPower HR is here to help guide you as we navigate through the uncharted waters of the COVID-19 pandemic. This checklist should be used as a guide for organizations considering re-hiring employees from temporary layoff and who are returning from work after shelter-in-place restrictions have been lifted. As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to EmPower HR.

Workforce Planning

Many businesses have completed aspects of this phase while making initial decisions during COVID-19 impact but should continue workforce planning activities prior to planning employee recalls.

- Talent assessment to determine what positions and skill levels are needed throughout each phase of re-opening.
- Have your staffing needs changed?
- What additional resources will you need if employees decide not to return or are uncomfortable returning?
- What are essential positions to keep your business running at normal operation levels?
- Is your industry expecting a potential business surge upon re-opening where additional or temporary staffing may be needed?
- Will employees who were out of the business for several weeks need any additional training to get up to speed on new business procedures?

If additional hiring is needed, you may want to consider revised hiring practices due to social distancing practices.
- Consider looking at changing benefits or compensation to become more competitive.
- Utilizing remote interviewing.
- Update onboarding practices to consist of more virtual materials and training.

Employee Recall Procedures

Have a plan in place for phased re-opening of shelter-in-place orders for each impacted worksite to ensure return to work for employees is controlled, safe and organized.

Things to Consider Before Employees Return:
- Federal, State, local laws, and industry specific guidelines.
- Designate a point person or team to have ownership to coordinate and communicate return to work.

- Determine which employees will return to work (when & how).
- Determine selection methodology for who will be returning to work.
- Document selection methodology of recall to protect against potential claims.
- Will employees be returning to work onsite or remote working?
- Consider potential barriers of employees returning to work (schools closed, health issues, transportation, anxiety).
- Provide employee recall letter to designate if employees are returning or declining recall.

Policy & Procedures

Businesses are no longer operating under normal business circumstances. Consider what the new and hopefully temporary normal will look like for the organization and update/create policies to reflect the new environment.

Policy & Procedures to Consider:
- Extension of work from home policies.
- Flexible scheduling options.
- Relaxed attendance policy to encourage sick employees to stay home.
- Staggered meal and rest periods to encourage social distancing.
- FFCRA and state specific leave policies.
- Infectious disease control policy.
- Workplace safety policy (face masks, health screenings, cleaning, etc.).
- Updated travel policy to designate essential vs non-essential travel.
- Social distancing guidelines.
- Updated PTO policies; anticipate more time off request each new phase of re-opening.

Workplace Safety

Employers will be required to ensure their workplaces are safe for employees upon returning to business. We recommend businesses stay up to date with CDC Guidelines, as well as any federal, state or local government guidelines or legislation for workplace safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Workplace Safety Measures to Consider:
- Implementing employee health screening procedures.
- Education of employees on how to reduce risk and spread of COVID-19.
- Ensuring all employees who are currently ill or have contact with an ill family member stay home to self-isolate.
- Developing an exposure-response plan with an exposure communication plan.
- Providing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as: masks, gloves; face shields, and hand sanitizer.
- Detailed cleaning procedures and procurement of ongoing cleaning supplies.
- Establishing social distancing measurements within the workplace.
- Continue to restrict non-essential business travel.
- Defining customer and/or visitor contact protocols.

Also, businesses should continue to monitor and comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines and record-keeping/reporting obligations.

FFCRA & Leave Administration

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) became effective as of 4/1/2020 but employees will be eligible to utilize leaves under FFCRA until 12/31/2020. As employees return to the workplace businesses should plan to see continued use of FFCRA.

Best Practices under FFCRA:
- Upon returning to work, required FFCRA Posters should be visible in a conspicuous location.
- Ensure all employees have access to and understand leaves that may apply to them.
- Designate an internal point of contact for FFCRA and COVID related leaves of absence.
- Establish an internal process and procedure on how all leave requests will be handled.
- Consider FFCRA leave administration within exposure response plans.

Additional Leaves to Consider:
- Employees requesting additional personal leave due to being uncomfortable returning to the workplace.
- ADA accommodations due to higher-risk or anxiety.

EmPower HR's dedicated leave of absence team will help administer FFCRA leaves, to ensure proper documentation is obtained and payroll tax credits are applied based on appropriate FFCRA leave.

Best Practices

Additional best practices to consider upon having employees return from work during pandemic:
- Remain flexible, adjust workloads and schedules as employees are re-acclimating.
- Establish a pandemic contact or taskforce to monitor the anticipated resurgent of COVID-19 later in the year.
- Be prepared for future layoffs, temporary layoffs, or compensation reductions.
- Cross-train employees to ensure all essential functions or positions can be covered if there is a potential outbreak.
- Prepare employee communication in advance to ensure timely and transparent communication.
- Manager training to ensure workplace safety, address employee complaints, and potential exposure.
- If compensation was reduced, ensure FLSA compliance due to minimum exempt salary threshold.
- Revisit organization mission, vision and values to help re-engage and motive employees during times of uncertainty.

- Create and update business continuity plans in preparation for potential future emergencies.