



Pandemic Back-to-Work CHECKLIST

Employees and employers are all anxious during this time. So, returning to work is going to take empathy, analysis and planning. Business changes will need to be made and some of the changes will be long-term. Careful planning for reopening will be needed and communicating with your employees will be critical.

No two businesses will be the same in their planning. Consideration of all aspects of the startup will need to be analyzed before putting together your plan and process.

1. Communication will be necessary after your analysis.

- Public notification
 - Hours of operation
 - New set up of facility
 - What they can expect when arriving
- Staff notice
 - Who will return
 - Changes in job duties
 - Hours of work

2. Workplace Safety

- Employee health screening procedures
- Developing an exposure-response plan
 - Isolation & containment
 - Stay-at-home requirements
 - Exposure communication plan
- Providing personal protective equipment
 - Masks, gloves, face shields, etc.
 - Personal hand sanitizer
- Detailing cleaning procedures and procuring ongoing supplies.
- Establishing physical distancing measures within the workplace.
 - Staggered shifts and lunch breaks
 - Rotating weeks in office and working remotely

- Moving workstations to increase separation distance (6 feet distancing)
 - Implementing one-way traffic patterns in workplace
- Restricting business travel
 - Essential travel only (define)
 - Follow government and CDC rules.
- Defining customer and/or visitor contact protocols such as:
 - Directing customer traffic through workplace.
 - Limiting the number of customers in any area at one time.
 - No handshake greetings, remain 6 feet apart.
 - Using video or telephone conferencing instead of in-person client meetings.
 - Providing contactless pickup and delivery of products.
- Understanding and complying with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) record-keeping and reporting obligation:
 - Identify situations that might have virus exposures
 - Review OSHA regulations for work-related illnesses
 - Record necessary disease or virus occurrences that may occur in the workplace.

3. Bringing employees back to workplace

- Which employees will be returning?
 - Employee status during the virus (lay-off, furloughed, etc.)
 - Use a seniority system or any other nonincriminating process for return.
 - Consider labor costs (work share, lower wages, reduced hours, etc.)
 - Determine schedule and needs with total communication with staff before rolling it out.
- Notify state unemployment of employees being recalled for work. This is a state requirement, some employees may refuse to return and you need a plan of action for possibilities.

- Determine how to handle employees not returning and looking at the long-term employee relationship.
 - Employees who are fearful of returning to work.
 - Employees who have family obligations that interfere with the ability to return to work.
 - Employees who remain under quarantine due to exposure to the virus.

4. Employee benefits: This will vary with the type of employment relationship and any changes that might have been made with the pandemic. What will the business requirements be for the future.

- Group Health plans
 - Eligibility guidelines
 - Continued payments or COBRA
 - Coverage and/or changes
- Flexible spending accounts
 - Review guidelines
 - Any changes
- 401(k) plans
 - Review guidelines for layoff or furloughs.
 - Break in service issues
- Paid leave
 - Review Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)
 - Track timeline if using this benefit.
 - Determine if PTO policy or benefit changes need to be made.
 - Review the coordination of leave benefits.
 - Communicate benefits with all staff.

5. Compensation. These will be determined by the overall analysis you make on your business.

- Changes in pay increases (timing of designated raises, etc.)
- Pay cuts made during or after the pandemic.

- Changes in employee status
- Changes in bonuses or hazard pay during virus
- Review for pay equity

6. Remote Work. Telecommuting may have been a short-term solution during the virus but may be an avenue that also be a benefit for your business going forward.

- Allowing telecommuting where it can benefit the business.
- Staggering weeks in office of team members or sharing hours if possible
- Responding to employee requests when possible to keep good relations and positive work environment.
- Updating technology when possible to benefit staff.

7. Communications. This is key in building an employee team where by everyone works together. Clear changes need to be communicated and designed to fit your business.

- How staying home if sick and physical distancing policies are being used to protect workers and customers.
- Detail what training on new workplace safety and disinfection protocols have been implemented.
- Have exposure-response communications ready to go to any affected employees and customers.
- Have media communications ready to release on topics such as return-to-work timetables, safety protections in place, and how else the company is supporting workers and customers. Prepare to respond to the media for workplace exposures.

8. New-hire paperwork. Employees who are remaining on the payroll will not need to take this step, but if the employee has been separated then a new hire process may be necessary.

- Determine employment application and benefits enrollment requirements.
- Decide whether full or adjusted orientation procedures will be utilized.
- Submit new-hire reports for new and rehired employees.

- Notify state unemployment of returning employees.
- Address I-9 issues

9. Policy changes. The virus will change your business and changes will likely be needed to update policies going forward.

- Paid-leave
- Attendance
- Time-off request procedures
- Flexible scheduling options
- Meal and rest breaks
- Telecommuting policy and travel
- Information technology for current and new needs

10. Business continuity plans. As an employer it will be important to create a continuity plan to go forward. Now is the time to review and revise the plan to prepare for future emergencies.

- Implement a business continuity plan, including infectious disease control, if a plan did not exist prior to the virus crisis.
- Amend existing plans to include the latest emergency information, such as updates on epidemics and workplace considerations or changes in protocols for responding to global disasters.
- Update plan resources and contact information to ensure accuracy.
- Establish a pandemic plan to continuously monitor external and internal data and implement appropriate protocols.
- Plan for future closings and perform testing and exercise practice to perform the new plans is needed.

*Checklist adapted from [SHRM](#)