

PREPARING FOR EMPLOYEES TO RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE



There are several factors for businesses to consider such as local, state and federal guidelines, while planning the best course of action to safely welcome back employees to the workplace. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA – www.osha.gov/covid-19) have provided guidelines and recommendations dependent upon exposure risk levels for employees.

Businesses will need to identify and develop safety protocols to protect their employees and customers while adhering to social distancing guidelines. Social distancing calls for avoiding large gatherings and maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from others.

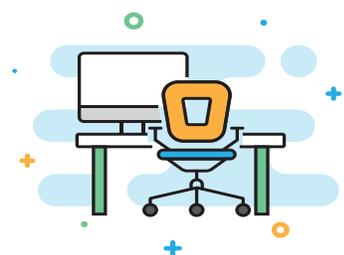
An orientation with returning employees is recommended. This orientation is an opportunity for a face-to-face discussion concerning new and updated policies and procedures, any enhanced safety measures, possible daily risk assessments and general COVID-19 education.



Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi has been your trusted partner throughout this time and we want to continue our support as you return to the workplace. We have implemented Return to Work practices on our campus and want to share this guide in hopes of helping your company be smart, be safe and be healthy as you transition employees back to work.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER TO PROMOTE HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS INCLUDE:

- Train employees on health and safety protocols
- Daily health screenings
- Limit workplace entrance/exits
- Physical changes to workplace including breakrooms, cafeterias and seating arrangements
- Increasing physical space and barriers between employees and customers
- Stagger shifts
- Downsize on-site operations
- Continue to work remotely
- Enhance cleaning measures
- Increase hand sanitizing stations
- Post visual signage throughout the workplace promoting hand hygiene and social distancing



HOW DO I MAINTAIN A HEALTHY AND SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

- Consider improving engineering controls by increasing ventilation rates and the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system.
- Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers and workplace visitors:
 - ▶ Provide tissues and no-touch trash cans
 - ▶ Provide soap and water
 - ▶ Place hand sanitizer throughout the workplace
 - ▶ Place posters that encourage hand hygiene throughout the workplace
 - ▶ Discourage handshaking
- Perform routine cleaning and disinfect all high-touch surfaces in the workplace.
- Discourage employees from using other employees' desk supplies, work tools or equipment.
- Provide disposable disinfectant wipes for employees to use at their desk.
- Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection if an employee is suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 at work.
- Advise employees before traveling to take precautions:
 - ▶ Check the CDC Traveler's Health Notices
 - ▶ Advise employees to check for COVID-19 symptoms
 - ▶ Advise employees who become sick while traveling to notify management immediately and then contact their Blue Primary Care Network Provider
- Be careful when hosting meetings and gatherings:
 - ▶ Consider using video conferencing or teleconferencing
 - ▶ Consider canceling, adjusting or postponing large work-related meetings or gatherings
 - ▶ If video conferencing or teleconferencing are not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces



HOW CAN I REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 AMONG EMPLOYEES?

- Employees with COVID-19 symptoms should notify management and stay home.

A wide range of symptoms have been reported and can cause mild to severe illness. Symptoms include:

- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

Or at least two of these symptoms:

- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Chills
- ▶ Repeated shaking with chills
- ▶ Muscle pain
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ New loss of taste or smell

- Employees who are sick should stay at home and contact their Blue Primary Care Network Provider if they believe they have been exposed to COVID-19, track their symptoms and get medical attention immediately if they experience emergency warning signs.

Emergency warning signs include:

- ▶ Trouble breathing
- ▶ Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- ▶ New confusion or inability to arouse
- ▶ Bluish lips or face

- Employees who are healthy, but have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should alert management immediately, stay at home for guidance and follow these CDC precautions at home:

- ▶ Limit contact
- ▶ Eat in separate rooms or areas
- ▶ Avoid sharing personal items
- ▶ Wear a mask and/or gloves
- ▶ Clean hands often
- ▶ Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces
- ▶ Wash and dry laundry on warmest settings possible
- ▶ Use lined trash cans
- ▶ Track health and watch for symptoms



**ENCOURAGE
EMPLOYEES
TO STAY
HOME IF
THEY ARE
SICK.**

EMPLOYEES WHO NEED EXTRA PRECAUTIONS

Protect employees at higher risk for severe illness through supportive policies and practices. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions are at higher-risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Consider offering high risk employees duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees. Employees at higher risk for severe illness should be encouraged to self-identify and employers should avoid making unnecessary medical inquiries.

SEPARATE SICK EMPLOYEES

- Any employee who is sick should not come to work
- Any employee who displays symptoms upon arrival to work or becomes sick during the day should immediately be sent home.
- If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of the possible exposure, but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees should be instructed about what to do if they are exposed to COVID-19 based on the CDC recommendations including:
 - ▶ Staying home until 14 days after last exposure and maintain social distance of 6 feet from others at all times
 - ▶ Self-monitor for symptoms
 - ▶ Check temperature twice a day
 - ▶ Watch for fever, cough or shortness of breath
 - ▶ Avoid contact with people at higher risk of severe illness, unless they live in the same home and had the same exposure
 - ▶ Follow the CDC guidance if symptoms develop: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

DO EMPLOYEES NEED MASKS OR PPE WHILE AT WORK?

- The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Cloth face coverings may reduce the risk of people who don't know they have the virus from transmitting it to others. These face coverings are not surgical masks or respirators and are not appropriate substitutes for employees in workplaces where masks or respirators are recommended or required.
- Employees should continue to follow their routine policies and procedures for PPE (if any) that they would ordinarily use for their job tasks.
- When cleaning and disinfecting, employees should always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used. Employers need to review their cleaning policies and procedures considering OSHA guidelines. Additional PPE may be needed based on setting and product.
- CDC does not recommend the use of PPE in workplaces where it is not routinely recommended. Facilities can use the hierarchy of controls, such as administrative, and engineering controls – these strategies are even more effective at preventing exposures than wearing PPE.



HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS:

Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) – https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,420.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html>

(OSHA) – <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

(EEOC) – <https://www.eeoc.gov/coronavirus>

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Resources - <https://www.bcbsms.com/be-healthy/covid-19-resource-center>