ASSESSING COVID-19 RISKS IN THE WORKPLACE

As we return to work, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is providing recommendations to reduce the potential for a COVID-19 outbreak in the workplace. OSHA has labeled healthcare settings as "high" or "very high" risk environments for workers. Because of this, healthcare companies have an increased risk for an OSHA inspection based on an employee complaint.

To decrease the risk of an OSHA inspection, employers should consider implementing an Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan to identify risk levels in the workplace and determine necessary control measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the work environment. This plan should consider the risks associated with all worksites and the tasks employees perform at those worksites.

This guidance is not a standard or regulation, and it creates no new legal obligations. It contains recommendations that are advisory in nature and informational in content and are intended to assist employers in providing a safe and healthy work environment.

To assess risks in the workplace, use the following checklists to identify areas that could impact employees.

EMPLOYEE CONSIDERATIONS	YES	NO	N/A
Are employees encouraged to stay home when sick?			
Are employees encouraged to stay home and self-isolate for 14 days if exposed to an individual who is COVID-19 positive?			
Are employees encouraged to properly wash hands or to properly use alcohol-based hand rubs?			
Are employees encouraged to practice respiratory etiquette, i.e., properly covering coughs and sneezes?			
Are employees practicing safe donning and doffing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as well as appropriately disposing used PPE?			
Are employees discouraged from using shared devices, such as computers, telephones, and copiers?			
Are employees able to clean and sanitize personal workspaces?			
Is nonessential travel discontinued?			

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OFFICE ENVIRONMENT CONSIDERATIONS	YES	NO	N/A
Can employees practice frequent and thorough handwashing? If soap and water are not immediately available, is alcohol-based hand rub, containing at least 60% alcohol, available?			
Can employees practice social distancing in the work environment? Is signage present to remind employees of social distancing?			
Are employees discouraged from congregating in spaces that do not allow for social distancing, i.e., meeting rooms and break rooms?			
Do the restrooms have no-touch sinks and soap dispensers?			
Do the restrooms have no-touch paper towel dispensers?			
Are face coverings or masks provided to employees?			
Is other PPE, based on job duties, available to employees and visitors?			
Are tissues and trash receptacles available to employees and the public?			
Are routine cleanings of the office environment conducted frequently?			
Is the office being cleaned with products recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to use against SARS-CoV-2?			
Does the office space have the option to isolate any employees who display signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19 while at work?			
Does the office space allow for the reconfiguration of workstations to promote social distancing?			
Does the office space allow for adequate ventilation of airflow?			
If appropriate to the environment, does the office have specialized negative pressure ventilation settings for aerosol generation procedures?			
Does the office use high-efficiency air filters?			
Can the office install physical barriers, such as plastic sneeze guards?			
Can the office install drive-through or curbside pickup to reduce contact?			

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ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS	YES	NO	N/A
Are flexible work schedules an option?			
Are employees able to work from home?			
Has an emergency communication plan established for workers to address concerns?			
Are sick leave policies flexible and consistent with public health guidance to allow for employees to stay home when sick and/or to care for COVID-19 positive family members?			
Have employees been trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of possible COVID-19 and how to report them if experienced at work?			
Are self-screening wellness protocols implemented for employees?			
Have employees been trained on proper infection control protocols, i.e., handwashing, respiratory etiquette, and donning and doffing of PPE?			
Have changes to appropriate policies been made to account for changes in processes made to prevent an outbreak in the workplace?			

**These checklists are intended to be used to assess the risk level of the work environment.
For any checklist items scored "NO," consider potential updates or alternatives that could help protect
the health and safety of your employees.**

Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC) is here to help you maintain a safe environment and best serve your communities, employees, and patients. Please reach out to us at ProviderSupport@achc.org.

For further guidance and a full listing of all OSHA guidelines, review the publication
"Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19."