REOPENING YOUR WORKPLACE AFTER CORONAVIRUS

Guidance, considerations, and best work practices for reopening communal workspaces such as offices, courthouses, and other public facilities.

NDACo
NORTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we interact with each other and how we accomplish our core mission. Preparing to reopen, or normalize, our organization presents many challenges, especially because the dangers of COVID-19 have not been completely mitigated.

We must all take steps to ensure the health and well-being of everyone we encounter. This short guide draws upon recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, with additional input from the County Employer Group and HR professionals at the North Dakota Association of Counties.

These recommendations cover six main points of consideration: Leadership, Engineering Controls, Social Distancing, Respiratory Etiquette and Hand Hygiene, Routine Disinfection and Effective Personnel Management (HR).

Leadership

People look to their leaders to point the way. Supervisors and managers must take an active, visible role in supporting these safe work policies. Setting a good example creates positive peer pressure.

Engineering Controls

The CDC recommends "improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system." This may include such things as increasing ventilation rates and increasing the percentage of outdoor air. Normally, office ventilation systems achieve four to ten air changes per hour. We recommend that you consult with your facility manager and/or a ventilation contractor to improve your ventilation.

Social Distancing

As long as there is no vaccination or cure for COVID-19, social distancing remains one of our best tools in keeping our workplaces safe.

Require and expect these practices:
- Minimize face-to-face contact.
- Re-evaluate all face-to-face meetings. Use online/remote methods when possible.
- If you must meet, allow no more than 10 people in a room and maintain 6 feet (minimum) between people.
- Avoid handshaking and other non-essential contact.
- Require appointments for visitors for in-person meetings to control the number of outside contacts.
- Restrict employees from congregating in work rooms, pantries, break rooms, copier rooms and similar areas.
- Restrict family members and other non-essential visitors.
- Use electronic methods as often as possible for external and internal documents to minimize deliveries.
- Direct deliveries to a centralized location. Employees should retrieve mail and packages from this location rather than at their workstation. Target that location for frequent disinfection. Enact procedures to limit the number of employees in that centralized location, such as an appointment calendar.

- Stagger work shifts, perhaps by alternating days, to lessen congestion in work areas, especially in the initial stages of returning to work.
- Consider prohibiting communal food prep and eating areas such as shared refrigerators and microwaves, community coffee pots, etc.
- Re-evaluate travel considerations to or from areas with active community spread. Cancel, postpone or virtualize nonessential meetings.
- All persons should continue to strive to reduce social contacts by limiting in-person meetings, lunch meetups and after-work hangouts.

Support Respiratory Etiquette and Hand Hygiene

Stop the person-to-person spread of the virus in the workplace by promoting and supporting proper respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.
- Post signage to remind everyone to wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer frequently and effectively.
- Make hand washing supplies and/or sanitizer readily available to all employees and visitors/clients in conference rooms, copy rooms, vehicles and common areas, especially near restrooms, break areas, entrances and exits.

Encourage employees to:
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or use the inside of the elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately sanitize hands as directed above.
- Mask usage is encouraged by the CDC for all persons having contact with the public. The use of masks among employees should be based on the risk level in your community. Communities with active community spread should require wearing face masks or other appropriate

face covering. Follow CDC guidance on how to make and use cloth face coverings, found at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html.
- Install a plexiglass barrier for employees who are in direct contact with the public and clients, such as receptionists. Physical barriers effectively reduce droplet transmission.

Routine Disinfection

Prevent infection through effective cleaning and disinfection of common spaces.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces, such as:
  » Door handles
  » Light switches
  » Countertops
  » Copy machines/printers
  » Telephones
  » AV equipment
  » Break room appliances
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment. If sharing is necessary, clean and disinfect items before and after use.
- Provide disposable wipes so commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use. Use clean rags/paper towels for cleaning community areas.
- Use disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19. A list can be found at www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2.

Effective Personnel Management (HR)

Effective personnel management can have a positive effect in reducing transmission of the virus among employees, clients and the public.
Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices:
- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance, and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Consider giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees should consider drafting non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave or return to work. Healthcare providers may be extremely

busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
- Review human resources policies and practices to be sure they are consistent with public health recommendations and existing state and federal workplace laws.
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need this additional assistance to cope with the many stresses of dealing with the current environment.

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:
- Employees who have symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments. Employees should also get approval from their supervisor/HR Dept. before returning to work.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC-recommended precautions

Separate sick employees:
- Employees who appear to have symptoms upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers and visitors, and sent home.
- Daily temperature checks upon arrival at work may be appropriate, depending on the level of perceived risk.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19, but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The employer should instruct fellow employees how to proceed based on the CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure.

PLEASE NOTE: This document reflects CDC guidelines at the time it was written. To receive the most updated information, please go to the CDC website at www.cdc.gov.

Below are additional resources your organization may find helpful:

Cleaning guidelines for reopening: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html

Disinfecting facility: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html

Isolation and Quarantine: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine-isolation.html

How to deal with Stress during COVID: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/mental-health-non-healthcare.html

Small Business Guidelines: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/guidance-small-business.pdf

Issue Date: May 8, 2020