

COVID-19 EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

How is your business responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?

With the COVID-19 pandemic came a plethora of new information and considerations for employers. This toolkit will help break down the material into useful and helpful information for your business.

Return to Work Considerations

OneGroup has developed a listing of helpful resources regarding return to work including a general return to work checklist and general information regarding New York Forward for employers' use to begin to plan the process of returning to work.

Step 1: Prepare the Workplace

- Set social/physical distancing parameters, which could include re-positioning desks and setting limits on in-person meeting attendees
- Create a safety and cleaning plan, including setting a regular schedule for cleaning
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) resources regarding cleaning and disinfecting are below:
 - [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)
 - [Reopening America: Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)
 - Employee hygiene posters are available [here](#).
- For businesses in New York, follow all applicable requirements consistent with NYS guidelines, which may include creating a re-opening safety plan. A template for the safety plan can be found [here](#). More information regarding New York Forward can be found in the section below.
- Implement employee health screening procedures, as recommended or required
- Consider [EEOC guidelines](#), as applicable
- Make PPE available to employees (while following appropriate health guidelines mandated by localities)
- Implement food/beverage protocols, including limiting self-serve food and creating a plan for sanitizing lunch/gathering areas
- Understand and comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) record-keeping and reporting obligations
 - [OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

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Step 2: Prepare the Workforce

- Manage anxiety and address employees fears of returning to the workplace
 - Determine how to handle employees who are unable or unwilling to return to work
- Solicit feedback regarding employees' thoughts of coming back to work
- Send reminders regarding social/physical distancing
- Communicate the return to work action plan, including the timeframe of return
- Review required leaves under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), and/or New York State Emergency Paid Sick Leave to ensure the organization and employees understand the eligibility requirements
- Create/edit policies regarding:
 - Return to work
 - Working from home
 - Guest and visitors, and employee travel
 - HR policies regarding illness, support for caregivers, PTO, etc.
- Understand the coordination of leave benefits and communicate these to employees as needed

Step 3: Enforce the Action Plan

- Reminders to employees
 - Reinforce new workplace procedures with constant communication, including communicating policy changes and ensuring employees stay home if sick
 - Consider implementing training on the new workplace safety and disinfection protocols, and have exposure-response communications ready to go to any affected employees and customers
- Ensure a culture of trust and transparency
- Continuously monitor the environment including regulatory changes and guidance issued by government agencies and localities, as well as the overall workplace environment, and modify the plan as needed

New York Forward

Governor Cuomo has recently outlined a plan to reopen New York State. New York will reopen on a regional basis as each region meets the established criteria. Businesses in each region will reopen in four phases, and must follow several applicable requirements, outlined by New York State. Reopening refers to non-essential businesses and business activities, but the guidelines also apply to essential businesses.

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Please note that New York Forward is an ever-evolving topic and the reopening guidance is subject to change as the phases progress. For the most up-to-date information on New York's phased re-opening plan, including employer requirements, refer to the New York Forward resources below:

- [Industries Reopening- Phases](#)
- [New York Forward FAQs](#)
- [Business Reopening Lookup Tool](#)
- [NY Forward Safety Plan Template](#)

Sorting Through Employee Leaves

Both the Federal government and New York State have released COVID-19 related leave laws for employees. Please find some resources below to help point you in the right direction. OneGroup has also developed a chart that illustrates the coordination of the various leave benefits, available [here](#).

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act)

Certain public employers, and private employers with fewer than 500 employees must provide employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions currently apply from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

- [Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Fact Sheet for Employers](#)
- [Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Questions and Answers](#)
- [Families First Coronavirus Response Act Required Poster \(Non-Federal Employees\)](#)

New York State Paid Leave for COVID-19

If your employee or their minor dependent children are under a mandatory or precautionary order of quarantine or isolation issued by the State, New York State Department of Health, local Board of Health, or other authorized government entity, they may be eligible for job-protected sick leave and compensation through a combination of disability and Paid Family Leave benefits. Please see the NYS definition of a quarantine order found [here](#). The leave available depends on employer size as of January 1, 2020, and an employer's net annual income.

- [NY COVID-19 Paid Leave: Guidance for Employers](#)

Unemployment Insurance Considerations

Many businesses have to face tough challenges of laying off or furloughing employees during the pandemic. Laid off/furloughed employees have access to Unemployment Insurance benefits. Below please find a summary of the Federal CARES Act in terms of Unemployment Insurance, as well as general information regarding New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey Unemployment Insurance.

- **CARES Act**

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- This Act expands states' abilities to provide unemployment insurance for many workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including for workers who are not ordinarily eligible for unemployment benefits. States are permitted to provide Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) to individuals who are self-employed, seeking part-time employment, or who otherwise would not qualify for regular unemployment compensation.
- The new law also created the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program (FPUC), which provides an additional \$600 per week to individuals who are collecting any type of Unemployment Insurance. This benefit is available for weeks of unemployment beginning after the date on which your state entered into an agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor and ending with weeks of unemployment ending on or before July 31, 2020. The additional \$600 per week is completely federally funded and will not have an effect on a businesses' Unemployment Insurance rate.
- [NY COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Fact Sheet](#)
- [PA COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Fact Sheet](#)
- [NJ COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Fact Sheet](#)

Government Agencies' COVID-19 Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [COVID-19 Resources for Businesses and Workplaces](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [General Business COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

- [COVID-19 Resource Center](#)

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