

# Managing a Pandemic - HR Checklist

**If you're like most people, the events of the past few days caught you unprepared, ill-equipped, and overwhelmed with the fast-changing reality of a pandemic.**

One thing is already crystal clear; preparing for a pandemic requires careful consideration and planning.

Who owns the plan? How is it updated? How often is it updated? And, who makes the decision to put this plan into action? These are the kinds of questions we need to answer at the outset.

We've put together a list of sensible considerations that most organizations will need to make regarding the people side of the business

## Think About Your Employee Health and Welfare

- Have employees been made aware of basic infection control guidelines to prevent the transmission of any viruses or diseases (handwashing, disinfecting workstations, social distancing, etc.)?
- Do you have a communication strategy for reaching employees?
- Do you have policies, procedures or resources to address your employees' psychological impacts resulting from an outbreak?
- Do you have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that could help support employees in times of uncertainty?
- Do you have policies or procedures to accommodate your employees' family obligations during an outbreak?
- Has support service been planned for employees such as transportation, daycare, meals and/or grief counselling?
- If employees deal with the public, are in-person interactions required to continue or are there alternate ways available to interact with the public?
- Is there a way to change the layout or seating plan of the workplace to help minimize close contact?
- Is employee work-related travel essential? Could technology be leveraged for meetings to take place virtually instead?
- Has an inventory been prepared for specialized equipment/facilities that may be needed during a pandemic?
- Are there employees who have sole access to incoming information (incidents reports, complaints, etc.)? Who is their designate? How is that information shared?

## Plan for HR Continuity

- What positions and skill sets are critical to the business continuing?
- Do you have a current list of staff complete with telephone numbers and/or email addresses?
- Are employees cross trained to cover other positions or tasks in the case employees are absent?
- If employees use public transportation, are they able to arrange alternative forms of transportation?
- Are employees able to work remotely?
- Do your employees have the equipment required to work remotely?
- If employees work remotely, do you have cyber security insurance?
- Is there a procurement policy in place to ensure essential materials are purchased?
- How can your employees communicate with each other during office hours and after office hours? Is there an alternate form of communication such as an online messaging, cell phones, pagers, etc.?
- Who will approve expenses during an emergency? Who is their backup?
- Are there options to bring in additional staff or volunteers?
- Do you have a list of recently retired staff (including phone numbers) who may be contacted in the event of extreme staff shortages?
- Have services in your business been prioritized to account for fluctuations in staff absences?
- Does your business have a contractual responsibility for the provision of services to the community during an emergency (provision of food or other supplies, mass housing, care for special needs, Home care, childcare)?

## Consider Legislative Requirements

- Has the Provincial or Federal Government declared a "public health emergency"?
- What does the applicable legislation for your company and sector say about layoffs and terminations?
- Are any employees entitled to a protected leave?
- Have you reviewed your contractual obligation to your employees?

