Employer Community
Coronavirus Update

Vanderbilt Health Employer Solutions

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CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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Background and Current Situation

Interim Guidance for Employers

Employer Planning Considerations

Creating an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan

Background and Current Situation

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and CDC will provide updated information as it becomes available, in addition to updated guidance.

Employers: Planning for a Possible COVID-19 Outbreak in the US

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The severity of illness or how many people will fall ill from COVID-19 is unknown at this time. If there is evidence of a COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S., **employers should plan to be able to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of severity and be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed**. For the general American public, such as workers in non-healthcare settings and where it is unlikely that work tasks create an increased risk of exposures to COVID-19, **the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low**. The CDC and its partners will continue to monitor national and international data on the severity of illness caused by COVID-19, will disseminate the results of these ongoing surveillance assessments, and will make additional recommendations as needed.

Background

- CDC is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in almost 70 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes has been named "coronavirus disease 2019" (abbreviated "COVID-19").

- On January 30, 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a "public health emergency of international concern" (PHEIC). On January 31, 2020, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency (PHE) for the United States to aid the nation's healthcare community in responding to COVID-19.

Source and Spread of the Virus

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV, and now with this new virus (named SARS-CoV-2).

The SARS-CoV-2 virus is a betacoronavirus, like MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV. All three of these viruses have their origins in bats. The sequences from U.S. patients are similar to the one that China initially posted, suggesting a likely single, recent emergence of this virus from an animal reservoir.

Early on, many of the patients at the epicenter of the outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have exposure to animal markets, indicating person-to-person spread. Person-to-person spread was subsequently reported outside Hubei and in countries outside China, including in the United States. Some international destinations now have apparent community spread with the virus that causes COVID-19, including in some parts of the United States. Community spread means some people have been infected and it is not known how or where they became exposed. Learn what is known about the spread of this newly emerged coronaviruses.

Locations with Confirmed COVID-19 Cases
Global Map

As of 11:00 a.m. ET March 3, 2020

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Locations with Confirmed COVID-19 Cases, by WHO Region

Africa
Algeria
Nigeria
Senegal

Americas
Brazil
Canada
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Guadalupe
Mexico
United States

Eastern Mediterranean
Afghanistan
Bahrain
Egypt
Iran
Iraq
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon
Morocco
Oman
Pakistan
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Tunisia
United Arab Emirates

Europe
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Belgium
Croatia
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Monaco
Netherlands
North Macedonia
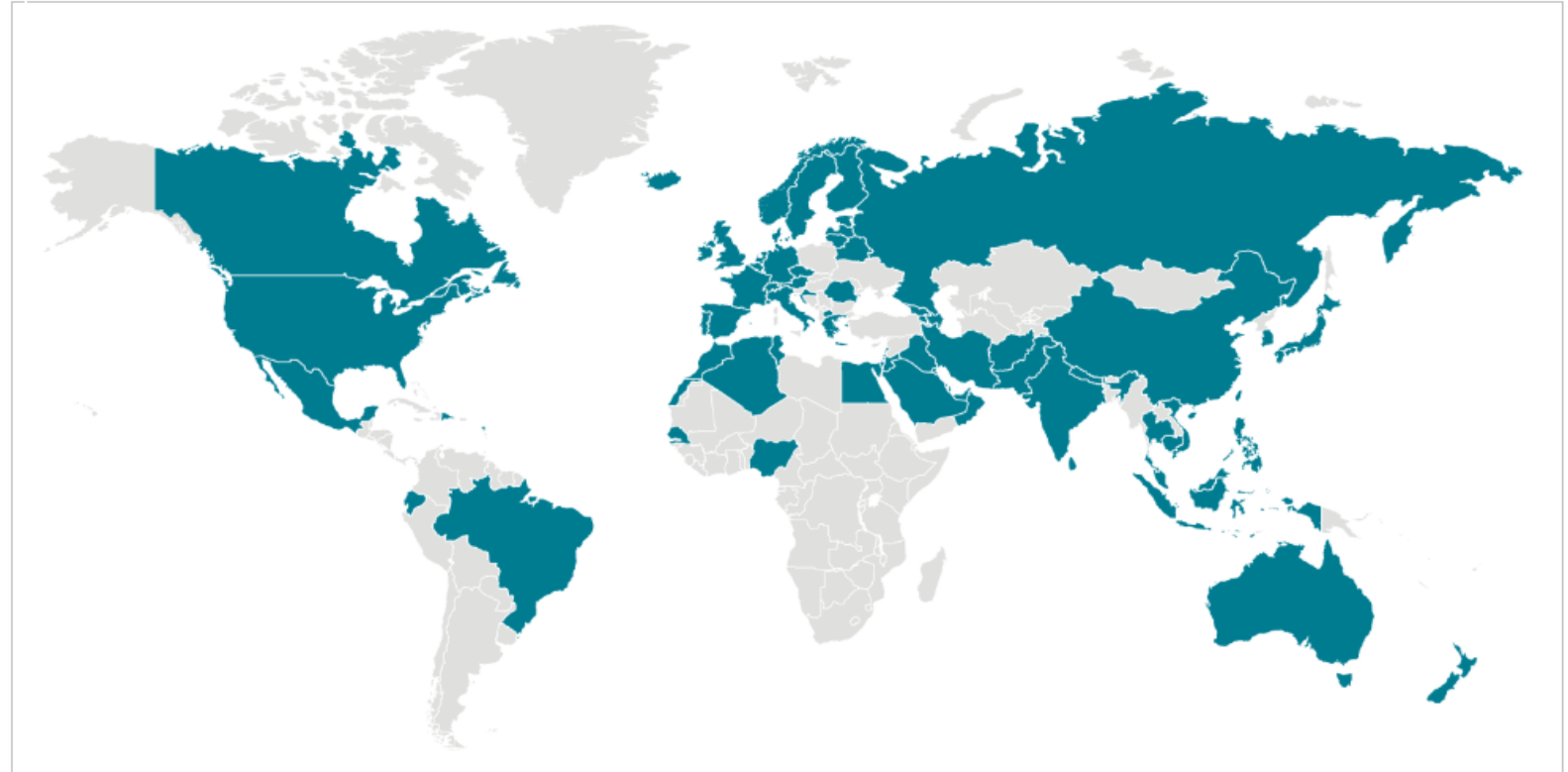Norway
Portugal
Romania
Russia

San Marino
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom

South-East Asia
India
Nepal
Sri Lanka
Thailand

Western Pacific
Australia
Cambodia
China
Hong Kong
Indonesia
Japan
Macau
Malaysia
New Zealand
Philippines
Republic of Korea
Singapore
Taiwan
Vietnam

Current Situation in U.S.

- Imported cases of COVID-19 in travelers have been detected in the US

- Person-to-person spread of COVID-19 was first reported among close contacts of returned travelers from Wuhan.

- During the week of February 23, CDC reported community spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 in California, Oregon, and Washington. Community spread in Washington resulted in the first death in the US from COVID-19, as well as the first reported case of COVID-19 in a health care worker, and the first potential outbreak in a long-term care facility.

States Reporting Cases of COVID-19 to CDC*

Reported Cases
- ○ None
- ○ 1 to 5
- ● 20 to 30

Territories: AS | GU | MH | FM | MP | PW | PR | VI

CDC
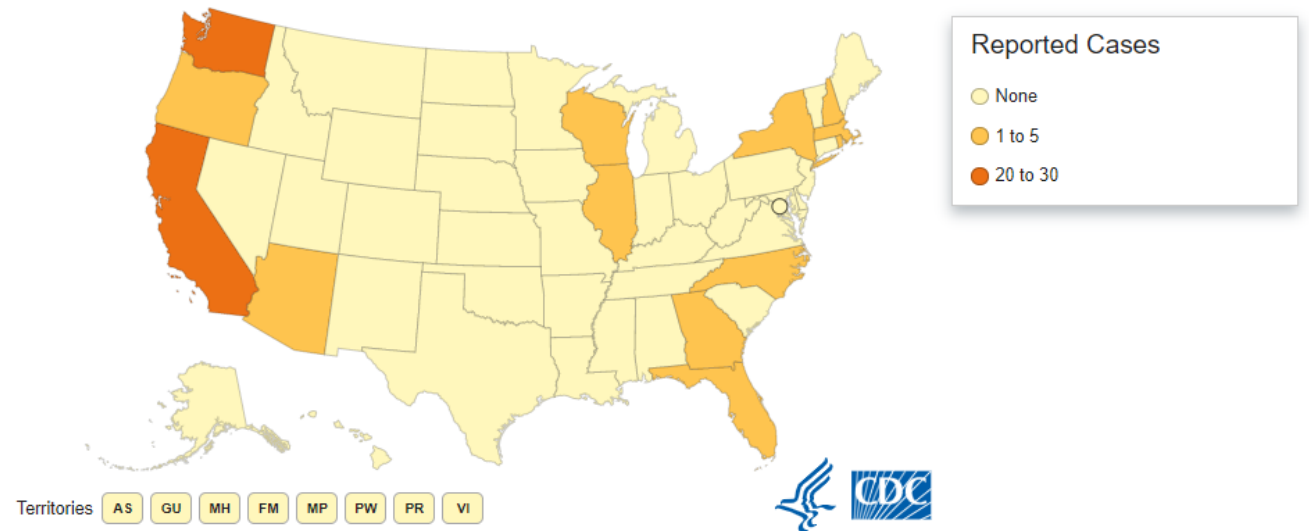
COVID-19: U.S. at a Glance*

- Total cases: 80
- Total deaths: 9
- States reporting cases: 13

Data include both confirmed and presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 reported to CDC or tested at CDC since January 21, 2020, with the exception of testing results for persons repatriated to the United States from Wuhan, China and Japan. States are now testing and publicly reporting their cases. In the event of a discrepancy, state case counts are the most up to date.

Illness Severity

- Both MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV have been known to cause severe illness in people. The complete clinical picture with regard to COVID-19 is not fully understood. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild to severe, including illness resulting in death. **While information so far suggests that most COVID-19 illness is mild, a report out of China suggests serious illness occurs in 16% of cases**. Older people and people with certain underlying health conditions like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example, seem to be at greater risk of serious illness.

- There are ongoing investigations to learn more. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Highlights of CDC's Response
Travel Guidance

CDC has issued the following travel guidance related to COVID-19:

- **China** — Level 3, Avoid Nonessential Travel — *updated February 22*
- **Hong Kong** — Level 1, Practice Usual Precautions — *issued February 19*
- **Iran** — Level 3, Avoid Nonessential Travel — *updated February 28*
- **Italy** — Level 3, Avoid Nonessential Travel — *updated February 28*
- **Japan** — Level 2, Practice Enhanced Precautions — *updated February 22*
- **South Korea** — Level 3, Avoid Nonessential Travel — *updated February 24*

CDC also recommends that all travelers reconsider cruise ship voyages into or within Asia at this time.

Interim Guidance for Employers

Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

- CDC is working across the Department of Health and Human Services and across the U.S. government in the public health response to COVID-19. Much is unknown about how the virus that causes COVID-19 spreads. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses.

- The following interim guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, in non-healthcare settings. The guidance also provides planning considerations if there are more widespread, community outbreaks of COVID-19.

- **To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described below to determine risk of COVID-19.** Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin, and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed COVID-19. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing.

- Updates are available on CDC's web page at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/covid19

CDC Recommended strategies for employers to use now:

1. Actively encourage sick employees to stay home

2. Separate sick employees

3. Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees

4. Perform routine environmental cleaning

5. Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps

CDC Recommended strategies for employers to use now

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- **Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever** (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

- **Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance** and that employees are aware of these policies.

- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the **importance of sick employees staying home** and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.

- **Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness** to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.

- **Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member.** Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

CDC Recommended strategies for employers to use now:

Separate sick employees:

CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).

CDC Recommended strategies for employers to use now:

Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:

- **Place posters** that encourage <u>staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene</u> at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.

- **Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles** for use by employees.

- **Instruct employees to clean their hands often** with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.

- **Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs** in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.

- Visit the coughing and sneezing etiquette and clean hands webpage for more information (examples provided).

CDC Recommended strategies for employers to use now:

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Perform routine environmental cleaning

- **Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces** in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.

- **No additional disinfection** beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.

- **Provide disposable wipes** so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

CDC Recommended strategies for employers to use now:

Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps

- **Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations** for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from China, and information for aircrew, can be found at on the CDC website.

- **Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of acute respiratory illness** before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

- **Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor** and should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.

- If outside the United States, **sick employees should follow your company's policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider** or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

CDC Posters on Coughing Hygiene, Handwashing, and Staying Home if You are Sick (PDFs provided)

COVID 19 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?
Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?
COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in China, and limited spread among close contacts has been detected in some countries outside China, including the United States. At this time, however, this virus is NOT currently spreading in communities in the United States. Right now, the greatest risk of infection is for people in China or people who have traveled to China. Risk of infection is dependent on exposure. Close contacts of people who are infected are at greater risk of exposure, for example health care workers and close contacts of people who are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. CDC continues to closely monitor the situation.

Have there been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.?
Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html.

How does COVID-19 spread?
The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but now it seems to be spreading from person to person. It's important to note that person-to-person spread can happen on a continuum. Some diseases are highly contagious (like measles), while other diseases are less so. At this time, it's unclear how easily or sustainably the virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading between people. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?
Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of
- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus?
Many patients have pneumonia in both lungs.

How can I help protect myself?
The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

There are simple everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. These include
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if I recently traveled to China and got sick?
If you were in China within the past 14 days and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, you should seek medical care. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?
There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

Is there a treatment?
There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

CDC

COVID 19 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

If you are sick with COVID-19 or suspect you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, follow the steps below to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care
You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home
People: As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

Animals: Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.

Call ahead before visiting your doctor
If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

Wear a facemask
You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

Cover your coughs and sneezes
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can; immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.

Avoid sharing personal household items
You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

Clean your hands often
Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Clean all "high-touch" surfaces every day
High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Monitor your symptoms
Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing). **Before** seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19. Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed.

Ask your healthcare provider to call the local or state health department. Persons who are placed under active monitoring or facilitated self-monitoring should follow instructions provided by their local health department or occupational health professionals, as appropriate.

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive.

Discontinuing home isolation
Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

CDC

CDC Posters What You Need to Know and What to Do if You are Sick (PDFs provided)

Employer Planning Considerations

Employers: Planning for a Possible COVID-19 Outbreak in the US

The severity of illness or how many people will fall ill from COVID-19 is unknown at this time. If there is evidence of a COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S., **employers should plan to be able to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of severity and be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed**. For the general American public, such as workers in non-healthcare settings and where it is unlikely that work tasks create an increased risk of exposures to COVID-19, **the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low**. The CDC and its partners will continue to monitor national and international data on the severity of illness caused by COVID-19, will disseminate the results of these ongoing surveillance assessments, and will make additional recommendations as needed.

Employers: Planning Considerations

All employers need to **consider how best to decrease the spread of acute respiratory illness and lower the impact of COVID-19 in their workplace** in the event of an outbreak in the US. They should identify and communicate their objectives, which may include one or more of the following:

a. reducing transmission among staff,
b. protecting people who are at higher risk for adverse health complications,
c. maintaining business operations
d. minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains.

Some of the **key considerations when making decisions** on appropriate responses are:

- **Disease severity** (i.e., number of people who are sick, hospitalization and death rates) in the community where the business is located;
- **Impact of disease on employees** that are vulnerable and may be at higher risk for COVID-19 adverse health complications. Inform employees that some people may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions.

Employers: Planning Considerations (continued)

Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members, dismissals of early childhood programs and K-12 schools due to high levels of absenteeism or illness:

- **Employers should plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism** at the workplace. Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.

- **Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions** so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.

- **Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others** and the community have on your services or products. Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).

Employers: Planning Considerations (continued)

- Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to **provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions** outlined in their business infectious disease outbreak response plan based on the condition in each locality.

- **Coordination with state and local health officials** is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside. Since the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities.

Creating an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan

Important Considerations for Creating an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan

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All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from COVID-19 while ensuring continuity of operations. During a COVID-19 outbreak, **all sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be encouraged, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly**.

Employers should:

- **Ensure the plan is flexible and involve your employees** in developing and reviewing your plan.
- **Conduct a focused discussion or exercise** using your plan, to find out ahead of time whether the plan has gaps or problems that need to be corrected.
- **Share your plan with employees** and explain what human resources policies, workplace and leave flexibilities, and pay and benefits will be available to them.
- **Share best practices with other businesses** in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

CDC Recommendations for an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan

- **Identify possible work-related exposure and health risks** to your employees. OSHA has more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures to COVID-19.

- **Review human resources policies** to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).

- **Explore whether you can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees** and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies. For employees who are able to telework, supervisors should encourage employees to telework instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved. Ensure that you have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees who may be able to work from home.

CDC Recommendations for an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan (continued)

- **Identify essential business functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements within your supply chains** (e.g., raw materials, suppliers, subcontractor services/products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations. Plan for how your business will operate if there is increasing absenteeism or these supply chains are interrupted.

- **Set up authorities, triggers, and procedures for activating and terminating the company's infectious disease outbreak response plan, altering business operations** (e.g., possibly changing or closing operations in affected areas), and transferring business knowledge to key employees. Work closely with your local health officials to identify these triggers.

- **Plan to minimize exposure between employees and also between employees and the public**, if public health officials call for social distancing.

- **Establish a process to communicate information to employees and business partners on your infectious disease outbreak response plans** and latest COVID-19 information. Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.

CDC Recommendations for an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan (continued)

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- In some communities, early childhood programs and K-12 schools may be dismissed, particularly if COVID-19 worsens. **Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees**, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school. Businesses and other employers should prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies for these employees.

- **Local conditions will influence the decisions** that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies; employers should take the time now to learn about plans in place in each community where they have a business.

- If there is evidence of a COVID-19 outbreak in the US, **consider canceling non-essential business travel to additional countries per travel guidance** on the CDC website.

  - Travel restrictions may be enacted by other countries which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while on travel status.

  - Consider cancelling large work-related meetings or events.

- **Engage state and local health departments** to confirm channels of communication and methods for dissemination of local outbreak information.

Other Available Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- COVID-19 Website
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19pdf icon
- What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19pdf icon
- Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings
- Health Alert Network
- Travelers' Health Website
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Plannerpdf icon
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 Recommendations for Ships

Other Global, Federal Agencies and Local Partners:

- OSHA Guidance: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel_coronavirus/index.html
- World Health Organization, Coronavirus: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus
- TN Department of Health, Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html
- VUMC Infection Prevention Website: https://www.vumc.org/infectioncontrol/