

# Pandemic Infectious Disease Plan: Returning to a New Normal

May 27, 2020

As the shelter in place orders are lessening and expiring, businesses that had been closed are planning their re-opening and a return to a new normal. When thinking of the steps needed for reopening to employees and the public, business owners should evaluate current infectious disease plans for edits and updates. If without an infectious disease plan, business owners should prepare a plan now so they are best positioned to implement procedures and best practices to prevent workplace exposures and the spread of SARS-



CoV-2 (the virus responsible for COVID-19). Prior to workforce re-entry, employers should review current guidelines and requirements of federal, state, and local regulatory departments and agencies applicable to the current pandemic and be prepared to provide at least the minimum to prepare their business for opening. Information surrounding business restart and re-entry can be found everywhere but is inconsistent, not practical or not applicable to your facility. Starting with the implementation of control measures following the “hierarchy of controls”, as described within [“Preparing Workplaces for Re-Entry”](#), is a good place to begin.

The best place to start in evaluating your specific needs when assuring your employees and customers it is safe to return is by completing an audit of current programs and plans, if practical a site audit and a determination of gaps. Hiring a credentialed and experienced safety professional will provide you an invaluable resource in identifying areas to institute or update control measures, redesign layouts, and best position your business and locations for re-entry. OSHA, the CDC and Congress are requiring employers to develop, implement, and follow an infectious disease plan that includes COVID-19. To make such a plan effective and practical it should be company, work force, and location specific.

A comprehensive infectious disease plan should, at a minimum, include the following elements: purpose of the plan and definitions; designated point of contact and infectious disease workplace coordinator; definition and determination of essential personnel; remote work policies; training requirements; infection control measures including health certification, engineering controls, administration controls, personal protective equipment (PPE) and/or physical distancing, and personal hygiene; requirements for onsite customers or vendor and interactions; examples of guidelines to be posted throughout the facility; procedures for addressing a confirmed infection within the workplace; procedures on employee and

family medical leave and pay; company specific travel guidance; emergency contact information; special needs and accommodations; employee assistance programs; business continuity; and processes for reporting unsafe conditions. If applicable for your workplace, company specific materials and plans should be available in multiple languages to be shared with employees.

In addition, an infectious disease plan should include a recordkeeping component that may include summary sheets, daily check-ins, and managerial or point of contact checklists. Posted checklists can serve as reminders to employees and management on procedures to be followed and outline the infectious disease plan by summarizing key points in an abridged format. Images added to the checklists may be useful to provide specific guidance and focused reminders.

Each aspect of an infectious disease plan should be tailored, adaptable, and practical to address the changing landscape of specific business operations, locational differences, federal and state requirements and updates, work activities and employee concerns. Industry specific resources and recommendations can provide insight tailored to the aspects of your business.

Following reliable and recognized authoritative resources and recommendations, you as the employer provide your workforce the comfort and assurances needed to return to the workplace, protect your customers and clients from a risk of infection, and strengthen your company brand and reputation. RHP Risk Management's experienced and trained public health and scientific professionals continue to monitor, assemble, audit, and assess the evolving information on the current pandemic (SARS-CoV-2) and develop programs, systems, and plans to assist our clients to a healthy and safe workplace and facility.

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*At RHP Risk Management, we help our clients navigate the uncertainties associated with environmental and occupational hazards and risks. Our staff of public health professionals are experienced and trained in recognizing, anticipating and controlling hazards. For more information on RHP's infectious disease plan services and contact information, please visit [www.rhprisk.com/infectiousdiseaseplans](http://www.rhprisk.com/infectiousdiseaseplans).*

*For more resources concerning COVID-19, visit [www.rhprisk.com/coronavirus](http://www.rhprisk.com/coronavirus)*