

PRIMEX³ LEGAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE INFORMATION

COVID-19: Human Resource Considerations

The employment landscape in the New Hampshire local government sector has significantly shifted over the past few weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As our 'workplaces' adapt under these unprecedented circumstances, it is important to recognize that public sector employers are making decisions and confronting issues with respect to their workforces that are far outside the norm, and certainly beyond the scope of current policies and practices.

Below is a short list of Human Resource considerations for your review:

Workplace health and safety – Whether your employees are working on-site or remotely, encouraging safety in the workplace remains a critical employer best practice. As you review **state**, **federal**, and **international** guidelines, including the Governor's Emergency Orders, please remember that employee health and safety should be an essential consideration in your overall approach. Onsite and remote worksites are being directly impacted by potential and actual exposure to COVID-19, and in many cases have become a point of transmission.

Flexibility of employee leave and compensation - As you review your current leave policies, consider whether there is an opportunity to modify policy to allow for additional flexibility during this pandemic. Employers are considering flexibility in a number of ways, including offering extended paid leave to employees who become ill, have flu-like symptoms, need to stay home to care for a family member, are under quarantine, or feel uncomfortable coming into the workplace. There are different ways to approach this on a voluntary basis. In addition, beginning April 1st, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act creates periods of mandatory paid leave for eligible employees in specific situations related to COVID-19. Please see our bulletins and updates regarding this Act.

Continuity of operations – It is a good idea to develop/continually update an emergency operations plan tailored to the evolving crisis and your operational needs. Consider who should be on your Continuity of Operations Team, how often the team will meet, the division of labor, what services/functions are essential, how you will handle closure or significant loss of staff, and how you will continue to meet the needs and expectations of those you serve, as safely as possible.

Remote workers - If you haven't already done so, seriously consider allowing employees the opportunity to work from home. Examples of planning considerations include their equipment and technology needs, maintaining communication, adjusting supervision norms, developing

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reasonable work plans, and supporting employee burnout/loneliness. In conjunction with public health recommendations and Emergency Orders, it is appropriate to continually assess which employees truly need to remain together onsite. Allowing remote work, as much as is reasonably possible, will prevent your staff from being simultaneously impacted by an actual or potential exposure onsite.

Cybersecurity measures - With many Primex³ members and NH students working from home for the foreseeable future, and with employer attention focused on health, safety and continuity of operations, the potential for cyber-attacks has grown considerably. We have provided a Risk Management Bulletin entitled 'COVID-19 Cybersecurity Precautions' on the Resources tab of our website.

Returning to the workplace – There will come a time when employers begin welcoming their employees back into their facilities. We will address some key considerations on this topic in a future bulletin.

For more information or assistance, please contact our HR Consultant at 1-800-698-2364; ckilmister@nhprimex.org.

Please Note: All of our COVID-19 related updates and bulletins can be found on our website at www.nhprimex.org

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Primex³
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