



Coronavirus Issues in the Workplace:

Do's and Don'ts for Managers and Supervisors
By Liesel B. Stevens



The COVID-19 virus has created challenges for all employers. Managers and supervisors face employee questions and concerns on a daily basis. It is important that employers train their managers how to appropriately respond so that virus-related communications to employees are consistent and lawful. Generally, managers and supervisors should not make individual decisions about employee virus-related issues. Instead, employees should be referred to the human resources department or to another company representative in charge of COVID-19 issues.

Below is general guidance for managers and supervisors:

DO: Stay informed about your company's policies for employees regarding the COVID-19 virus. All employers should have an action plan and/or specific policies in place regarding COVID-19. The plan should include at a minimum: (1) instructions to employees on what to do if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or if they may have been exposed to the virus; and (2) guidance on personal hygiene practices, such as the importance of frequently washing hands and avoiding large gatherings.

DO: Contact your company's human resources team (or other company representative designated to handle Coronavirus issues) if you observe that an employee has symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath).



DO: Refer employees to human resources (or designated company rep) when and if they have questions or concerns about COVID-19, including the following issues: any health concerns or symptoms they or their family members are experiencing; exposure or potential exposure to infected individuals; requests to work remotely; personal and business travel; wearing of protective gear, such as masks and gloves; and any other requested accommodations.

DON'T: Disclose the identity of employees who are diagnosed with or have symptoms of COVID-19 to coworkers. The same rule applies to the identity of employees who have been exposed or potentially exposed to an individual with COVID-19. All such information should be shared only with human resources, who will handle the disclosure of necessary information to protect health in the workplace.

DON'T: Discuss an employee's private medical information with the employee or coworkers. While you may talk to an employee about his or her symptoms in order to determine whether the employee should be sent home, you should not discuss any underlying or other medical conditions. For example, do not ask an employee about respiratory conditions or immune disorders that may make them more susceptible to COVID-19. Such information is considered private.

DON'T: Ask an employee about the medical condition of the employee's family members. This information is also statutorily protected and private.



Liesel B. Stevens

Liesel B. Stevens is a member of the firm's Employment and Labor Law Section. Her employment practice focuses on defending employers in litigation matters and advising employers on various state and federal employment laws.