



Practical Considerations For Utah Employers: Checklist For Returning Employees To Work

Employers in Utah and throughout the country are in various stages of reopening their workplaces and welcoming employees back to work.

On April 16, 2020, the [White House issued guidelines](#) for a three-step process to “reopen” the economy based on a variety of geographic, demographic, and economic factors. Governor Gary R. Herbert also [set forth a plan](#) for Utah’s health and economic recovery.

To help employers during the “reopening” process, the following pages provide seven detailed steps employers should follow in planning to reopen their workplaces:

1. Create a COVID-19 planning team
2. Implement safety protocols in the workplace
3. Impose travel restrictions
4. Consider remote work
5. Devise a clear employee communication policy
6. Prepare a robust employee reporting policy
7. Formulate a rapid response plan in case of infection arising in the workplace

On the final page, we provide links to various federal and Utah resources that employers should consult on a regular basis.

1. Create a COVID-19 Planning Team

Create a COVID-19 planning team consisting of Human Resources, Finance, Legal, Communications, and Security/Risk Management.

Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact in the workplace.

Schedule information sharing with your landlord, co-tenants, technology vendors, and other essential third parties.

Before resuming business operation, check the building to see if it's ready for occupancy by inspecting ventilation, mechanical, and life safety systems.

Conduct a thorough hazard assessment of the workplace to identify areas that hold potential increased risk for COVID-19 transmission.

Routinely consult the CDC website for further guidance.

Routinely monitor what phase your county is in by visiting [Utah's Health Guidance Map](#).

Consult state and local safety resources ([Utah's official COVID-19 page](#), SLC Chamber of Commerce, Utah Department of Health).

Routinely consult industry association guidelines.

2. Safety Protocols For Your Workplace

Consider creating and using an effective employee self-certification form/questionnaire focused on identifying common symptoms.

Consider developing temperature taking protocol for any person entering the workplace. Daily screening is recommended for businesses serving high-risk populations.

Consider the possibility of COVID-19 tests for employees or any outside person entering the office. This will require there to be ample tests available to the public, and you may need to limit your tests to those who are exhibiting symptoms, or who have not recently been tested.

Certain employees may be required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE), depending upon their level of risk of exposure. All employees should wear face masks.

Social Distancing in the Workplace: Create rules to ensure that employees maintain a distance of no less than 6 feet from one another at all times. This may include:

- Modifying or adjusting seats, furniture, and workstations to maintain social distancing of 6 feet.
- Installing transparent shields or other physical barriers when social distancing is not possible.
- Posting signs or using other visual cues such as decals or tape indicating proper distancing when physical barriers are not possible.

Provide ample sanitary items (wipes, hand sanitizer, disinfectant) for employees.

Encourage regular hand washing, either at hand washing stations or in restrooms. If possible, add additional hand washing stations in the office.

Make a list of and clean all frequently used surfaces in the office, such as ledges, tables, workstations, doorknobs, elevator buttons, and copiers/printers. Determine what items employees will/will not be responsible for self-cleaning.

Place hand sanitizer throughout the office as much as possible.

Limit traffic in commonly used areas such as kitchens, copy rooms, restrooms, hallways, fitness centers, and elevators. Consider closing kitchens and encouraging employees to bring lunch.

Consider staggering schedules or shifts of employees to reduce employee interaction.

Eliminate shared workspaces, if possible.

Encourage online communications or phone calls in place of in-person meetings and digital files in place of paper files.

If an employee refuses to follow employer restrictions after notice and education, bar him/her from the workplace.

3. Travel Restrictions

Limit travel to any “hot spots” or areas where there is an increased risk of exposure. Follow the CDC Guidance to determine if travel is essential.

Instruct employees showing any symptoms of COVID-19, such as elevated temperatures or respiratory illness, not to travel and to inform Human Resources of any such condition.

Require employees to inform you of any travel, business or personal, to any “hot spots” or areas of increased exposure. Consider requiring employees who have traveled to such places to work from home.

Consider self-quarantine for traveling employees.

4. Consider Remote Work

Decide under what circumstances remote work will be permitted, including possibility of exposure, signs of illness, need to interact face-to-face with other employees/clients, employees working in “hot spots,” increased need for child care, or tending to an ill family member at home.

Set and communicate clear policy on remote work, both when it will be allowed and how to work safely from home. Be sure to reinforce company policies on overtime, meal and rest periods, timekeeping, attendance and punctuality, PTO, and sick leave.

Assess the costs of working remotely (e.g. reimbursement of expenses of employees such as portions of mobile phone and/or internet bills).

Consult with IT experts to ensure that remote employees have sufficient resources to work effectively from home. Also ensure that IT professionals have accounted for security of digital information at home.

5. Create an Effective Communication Policy

Create a COVID-19 policy that clearly addresses all of the issues described above, including sanitary expectations of employees, resources in the office for protection, travel, remote work, social distancing, and other issues.

Include all employees in the workplace in communicating plans such as, but not limited to, management staff, utility employees, relief employees, janitorial staff, maintenance staff, and supervisory staff.

Ensure that leave policies reflect new leaves available under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and other state laws and local ordinances.

Routinely communicate with workforce as to developments, changes, or answers to common questions.

Ensure every employee's contact information and emergency contact details are up to date and ensure a plan is in place to reach employees quickly.

Identify the Human Resources professionals who will receive any concerns from employees about workplace safety, problems with cleanliness or employee hygiene, and employee illness. Be sure that Human Resources is prepared to respond to these concerns and, if necessary, to consult counsel or workplace safety consultants about them.

Display posters about common symptoms, handwashing, wearing masks, social distancing, touching face, covering sneezes and coughs with cloth, tissue, elbow or sleeve, avoiding hand shaking, and cleaning protocols.

Communicate your policies to all employees, vendors, guests, and suppliers.

Anticipate that employees returning to work will have many concerns about routine habits in the office or the practices of fellow employees.

6. Create a Thorough Reporting Policy

Create a policy allowing employees to make those concerns known anonymously to someone in management, likely in Human Resources.

Develop a system for rapid and thorough investigations of any concerns raised by employees.

Include a robust anti-retaliation policy which encourages employees to make concerns known and prohibits any retaliation.

7. Formulate a Rapid Response Plan In Case of Infection

Train managers/leadership to spot symptoms and of their responsibility to immediately report observed or employee reported concerns to Human Resources.

Do not allow employees to come to work if they feel sick. Create or maintain non-punitive leave policies so employees do not feel pressured to come to work when they are sick.

Employees who become sick or who appear to have COVID-19 symptoms should be separated from other employees/customers immediately and sent home.

Perform a thorough deep cleaning, with outside vendors if possible, of all workspaces visited by the infected employee, and of the workplace in general.

If you learn of an employee infection, notify others who came into contact with the infected employee that they may have been exposed to the virus and direct them to work from home, if possible, and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days. DO NOT identify the infected employee by name.

Maintain daily testing of temperatures for employees, common symptom questionnaires, and, if possible, COVID-19 testing.

Consider increased remote work for infected employees for a period of time.

Communicate regularly with health and safety experts and legal counsel to ensure that you are complying with legal responsibilities.

Notify appropriate state and local authorities of reported infections (Utah Department of Health).

Consult, as needed and as possible, with medical officers from local hospitals, or the government equivalent.

We're Here to Help

Ray Quinney & Nebeker can help with your questions regarding return-to-work and any other COVID related business matters.

Federal and State Resources To Consult

[CDC Resuming Business Toolkit](#)

[CDC Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[CDC COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings](#)

[OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

[CDC Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission](#)

[CDC Coughing and Sneezing Etiquette](#)

[CDC When and How to Wash your Hands](#)

[OSHA COVID-19 Guidance on Social Distancing at Work](#)

[OSHA Injury and Illness Record Keeping and Reporting Requirements](#)

[Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\): Employer Paid Leave Requirements](#)

[EEOC: Coronavirus and COVID-19](#)

[EEOC: What You Should Know about COVID-19](#)

[EEOC: Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

[White House: Opening Up American Again](#)

[Utah Guidance: Utah's Health Guidance System- providing a map of the color-coded risk phases](#)

[Utah Guidance: Workplace Resources- Returning to the Workplace](#)

[Utah Guidance: Governor Herbert's Utah Leads Together Version 2 Plan for a Health and Economic Recovery](#)

[Utah Guidance: Phased Business Guidelines FAQs](#)

[Utah Guidance: SLC Chamber of Commerce Stay Safe to Stay Open](#)