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Guidance for Businesses: Preparing for a COVID-19 Outbreak

As an employer, there are steps you can take now to lessen the impact of an infectious disease outbreak on your workforce while ensuring your business operations can continue.

One of the most important things you can do is also one of the simplest: remind your staff that all sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace. Additionally, encourage employees to wash hands frequently, and ensure commonly touched surfaces are cleaned regularly.

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommends several strategies business should implement now, before COVID-19 infections begin spreading through our community.

Employees & Illness; Sick Leave

- **Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.** Employees should be symptom-free and fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines before returning to work.
- 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.

Serving Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn,
Liberty, Long, and McIntosh counties.



We Protect Lives.

Encourage Healthy Behaviors

- **Place posters** that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene 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.
- 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.

Discourage Stigma & Discrimination

It's also important to be mindful of the language you use and the policies you enact, ensuring you do not inadvertently promote stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection.

More Information for Businesses

The CDC has more planning guidance, information, and resources for businesses on its website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>