EMPLOYERS for HEALTH Consortium
—Akron, OH

**COVID-19 Quick Start Guide for Employers Supporting a
Healthy Work Environment during the Pandemic**

SUMMIT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH — SCPH

Objective: To guide employers' efforts to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak conditions on businesses, workers, customers, and the public. **Responsible RestartOhio** recommends five protocols for all businesses: 1) Recommend face coverings, 2) conduct daily health assessments, 3) maintain good hygiene, 4) clean and sanitize the workplace, and 5) limit capacity to meet social distancing guidelines. Key resources include **General Office Environments**; **Consumer, Retail & Services**; **and Manufacturing, Distribution & Construction**.

Instructions: Employers review and consider implementing the recommended actions steps below. Links within the selected action steps access sample policies and other resources to help carry out the recommendations within your worksite.

Employer Actions
Reopen Worksites in a Careful Manner. A slow, staggered, gradual return, not a rapid influx, is what is recommended to prudently monitor the health and safety of employees as the employer ramps up onsite operations.   1. **Define Scope of Return to Work and Who Returns to the Worksite.** Employees that can telework should consider continuing to work from home. Focus on those whose roles are not able to be performed remotely or cannot work at full productivity at home to return to the office. Also, consider school and/or child care center closures and their impact on employees. With many schools and childcare centers remaining closed, some employees will not be able to simply return to the workplace with no available child care until these facilities reopen.   2. **Set Expectations.** Employees return to work does not mean return to pre-global pandemic habits. Whether it's called the "new normal" or "transitional normal," work life will be different and requires a new set of expectations. Prepare for the possibility of a "boomerang" or relapse of disease that may require the implementation of restrictions again. Use this transitional time to update your COVID-19 plan with lessons learned and best practices in case mass work from home/stay-home restriction is required again.
Maintain a Clean, Safe, Hygienic Workplace.   1. Require frequent hand washing and hygiene. Consider setting up sanitizing and hand washing stations throughout plants, workspaces, and offices.   2. Perform frequent enhanced environmental cleaning of commonly touched surfaces, such as workstations, countertops, railings, door handles, and doorknobs. Use cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.   3. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by employees before each use.
Implement Physical Distancing in the Workplace. Physical distancing has been shown to minimize the spread of this highly contagious virus. The following actions are recommended by the Ohio Department of Health and others in order to help employees maintain physical distancing in the worksite.   1. **Ensure minimum six feet distance** between people. If not possible, install barriers and have employees wear face coverings. Adjust production lines to provide more space between workers.   2. Only have a segment of employees in the office by offering telework and staggered shifts to enhance distance between employees.   3. Establish a maximum capacity (e.g., 50% of fire code).   4. Address shared co-sharing work spaces. Promote the continuance of telecommuting wherever possible, employers can temporarily allow shared workspaces to be repurposed so that those who are returning onsite can use a dedicated workstation each day.   5. Close or reconfigure common areas such as cafeterias, gyms and break rooms. If open, disinfect areas daily, eliminate buffets, stagger seating, and use disposable tableware.   6. Consider canceling non-essential business meetings and travel per CDC's travel guidance.   7. Develop and communicate a process to isolate sick employees should they become unwell while at work. Separate employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms from other employees and send them home immediately. Restrict their access to the business until they have recovered.

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Employer Actions
Contact the local health department about suspected cases or exposures. Click here for a sample communicable disease policy.

Recommend the Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
1. Require all employees to wear face coverings, except for reasons defined by the Ohio Department of Health, including if there is a safety or health issue.
2. As appropriate, use engineering controls (e.g., clear plastic sneeze guards, high-efficiency air filters, increased ventilation rates) to reduce exposure.
3. Provide protection supplies such as soap and water, hand sanitizer, tissues, and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
4. To access PPE supplies, use the Ohio Emergency PPE Makers' Exchange, an online marketplace created by the Ohio Manufacturing Alliance to Fight COVID-19 where organizations that need PPE and related equipment can find a selection offered by Ohio manufacturers and makers.

Temperature Checks and Screening.
1. Encourage employees to do a self-assessment each day to check if they have any COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc.). If they show symptoms, require employees to stay at home.
2. Ohio's Department of Health requires employers to implement temperature checks before employees are permitted to report to work daily. If elevated, employees should stay home until they are free from fever and other symptoms for no less than 24 hours.

Support Sick Employees and Contact Tracing.
1. Ensure that your sick leave policies are up to date, flexible, and non-punitive to allow sick employees to stay home to care for themselves, children, or other family members.
2. Suspend the requirement for a doctor's note to validate the illness or return to work of employees sick with acute respiratory illness; healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
3. Actively encourage sick employees to stay home until they are free of fever or symptoms (without the use of medication) for at least 24 hours. If the employee is diagnosed with COVID-19 by their provider, they should follow the most current quarantine guidance outlined by the Ohio Department of Health.
4. **Per guidance from Responsible RestartOhio, when an employee tests positive for the COVID-19 after having returned to work:**
   a. Immediately report employee or customer infections to the Summit County Public Health (SCPH) telephone 330.926.5795 or on the website at SCPH.org/covid.
   b. Work with SCPH to identify potentially exposed individuals to help facilitate appropriate communications and contact tracing.
   c. Shutdown shop/floor for deep sanitation if possible.
   d. Professionally clean and sanitize site and location.
   e. Reopen in consultation with Summit County Public Health.

Follow Testing Recommendations. While the availability of diagnostic testing (test to identify presence of the virus) and antibody detection are important for the public health community to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, there remains significant limitations in understanding of the virus. There is also no evidence to date that detecting antibodies can predict whether an individual is immune to reinfection with the COVID-19 virus. Therefore, consideration for its use in the workplace at this time is premature. This topic should be followed in case this recommendation changes.

Reinforce Key Messages. Employers should share key messages (e.g., staying home when sick, using cough and sneeze etiquette, and practicing hand hygiene regularly) to all employees and place posters in areas where they are most likely to be seen.

Promote Emotional Well-being and Mental Health and Provide Options for Employees Concerned to Return to Work. Some employees may ask how they can be reassured that they will be safe upon their return. Rates of stress and anxiety are expected to be on the increase for the foreseeable future, and for good reason. It's understandable that some employees would be nervous about returning to the workplace; the same measures that keep a person safe can also cause intense worry and isolation. A first step is to have a conversation with the employee and determine what their fears are, as well as thinking about all the different options at your disposal. Choices may vary based on country laws, regulations, job roles and union/works councils' negotiations.