

Your Workplace COVID-19 Pandemic Plan A CHECKLIST

Workers Health
& Safety Centre



Whether or not your workplace has an existing pandemic plan to combat the COVID-19 virus, consider asking for a conference call of joint health and safety committee (JHSC) members to address this critical issue. The following is a list of things to consider when developing or reviewing a pandemic plan. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it should get the discussion going.

- ✓ The plan should be in writing and easily accessible to all. Its stated main goal should be to eliminate worker exposure to the infectious virus by containing the spread of the virus throughout the workplace.
- ✓ Clear statements of roles and responsibilities should be included in the plan (i.e., who notifies workers about the activation of the plan and its termination, to whom and how do workers report, how is the illnesses tracked, who stocks required resources.) **Note:** All occupationally acquired illness must be reported to the Ministry of Labour, JHSC, worker health and safety representative (HSR) and union (where present) as per the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. In a health care sector organization illness outbreak must also be monitored and reported to the Public Health Unit as required by the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. Outbreaks in long-term care homes must be reported to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.
- ✓ The plan should include a thorough hazard assessment for potential exposures, undertaken with the participation of the JHSC or worker HSR, with guidance from Public Health Ontario and the Ministry of Labour and taking into account the precautionary principle.
- ✓ Develop measures and procedures for limiting exposure including thorough and proper hygiene and cleaning measures, social distancing and protective equipment.
- ✓ Methods of control should follow the usual hierarchy of controls: At the Source, Along the Path and as a last resort At the Worker (i.e., through engineering controls, administrative controls, work design/organization and personal protective equipment).
- ✓ To ensure workers have the knowledge and skills to reduce virus transmission, employers must provide appropriate information, instruction or training. All must be developed in consultation with and reviewed by the JHSC or health and safety representative.
- ✓ There should be provisions for communicating the plan in a clear and timely manner to all workers during the pandemic. Monitoring and communicating the status of an outbreak, no matter the workplace sector, is also essential. Further, stay in contact with workers who are sick at home.
- ✓ Consider modifications to existing practices and provisions, including sick leave policies to enable workers to take time off to isolate themselves when ill and to care for ill family members.

- ✓ Restrict people who are unwell or returning from international travel from entering the workplace (i.e., posted alerts and screening) and enforce 14 days of self-isolation before workers can return to work.
 - ✓ Workers advised to work from home should be properly equipped with consideration for their health and safety.
 - ✓ Where staffing numbers are reduced because of illness, measures must be in place to address these shortages and their potential to endanger worker health and safety. To assist these measures the pandemic plan should make a determination between essential and non-essential operations.
- ✓ Provide psychosocial support (i.e., through an Employee Assistance Program) to workers during and after a pandemic to relieve stress and anxiety.
 - ✓ Implement assessments or emergency drills to identify weak planning, training effectiveness or areas that need to be changed in the plan.
 - ✓ Provide a list of trusted resources workers can use to get more information on how to protect themselves and their families at home during a pandemic. Begin with the [Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic](#). Although the original plan was specifically designed to address pandemic influenza, its components are universally applicable.

For more information: Review our COVID-19 resources at www.whsc.on.ca.

Be sure and check out our document entitled "*Safeguards for Workers, Confronting COVID-19.*"

