

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak: Tips for Managers and Leaders



As there is increasing spread of the COVID-19 virus in the U.S., employers should plan to be able to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of severity and be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed. For the general American public, such as workers in non-healthcare settings and where it is unlikely that work tasks create an increased risk of exposures to COVID-19, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is currently considered low (CDC.gov, 2020).

We do know that this type of event can be unsettling and anxiety provoking for people. Employees are looking to their managers and supervisors to provide guidance, information and resources. At Cascade Centers, we are here to help you support employees and navigate through this challenging time.

What you can do

Focus on preparation, not fear. Currently, cases of COVID-19 are still rare in the U.S. — far fewer than seasonal influenza cases. Assure employees that your company is closely monitoring information to help accurately determine level of risk to standard organizational operations. Point people to credible sources of information such as cdc.gov or local/state public health agencies. Be wary of sharing unsubstantiated information or opinions, which can be upsetting. People are looking to you as a leader to provide reliable information.

Communicate your organizational preparedness plan. Part of that plan could include options for telecommuting, adjustments in travel or meetings. Most companies are also sharing information about good hygiene and instructing those who are ill to stay home. Some employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members more than is usual. Be clear about your policies and procedures in these situations and be sure that employees know who to contact with questions or concerns to reduce uncertainty.

Keep common areas clean. Respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be encouraged, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

Encourage employees to take care of themselves. Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies. Also encourage people to be mindful of their emotional wellbeing. For many, this is time of uncertainty and high stress.

Help reduce stigma. Stigma and discrimination can occur when people associate an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality, even though not everyone in that population or from that region is specifically at risk for the disease. Communicate the facts that being Chinese or Asian American does not increase the chance of getting or spreading COVID-19. Do not tolerate discrimination within your organization.

Connect people with resources. Uncertainty can be overwhelming. Remind employees they have access to resources and counseling through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) by calling 800-433-2320.

Additional resources:

[CDC Fact Sheet about Coronavirus](#)
[EAP Member Site](#)

