



Thrive in
Your Workplace
Redefining Workplace
Mental Health

COVID-19 Mental Health Guide for Employers



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COVID-19 Mental Health Guide for Employers

The coronavirus global public health emergency will have significant implications for the mental health of individuals around the world. This can be particularly true for employees who are interacting with the public in new ways or whose workplaces have been transformed as a result of the crisis. Social distancing, exposure to illness and loss, financial pressures, and rapidly changing priorities, will increase the strain on all employees. These shifts will likely increase the prevalence of mental health challenges, exacerbate underlying conditions, and accelerate mental health crises.

Workplaces, however, can be important sources of stability as we weather this evolving crisis together. Thrive in Your Workplace (TWP) has seen employers step up to prioritize the health of their employees in creative ways – such as introducing innovative mental health service delivery partnerships, thoughtful social support programs, and flexible workplace policies.

TWP's **COVID-19 Mental Health Guide** is designed to help all employers promote employee mental health during and following the coronavirus outbreak. We urge you to do your part in reducing the stigma of mental health challenges, building awareness of available mental health resources, and encouraging employees in need to connect to mental health support.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

The following pages include a checklist, concrete strategies, best practices, and messaging for employers to use right away. To get started, we recommend that you:

- **Nominate a small group of staff to lead your workplace mental health efforts** during this time, including implementing the checklist below
- **Use the information in this guide to develop an internal process to promote mental health resources and respond quickly to mental health challenges** emerging during this crisis
- **Customize the email template on [page 17](#) to communicate regularly with your employees** about mental health, in order to reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behavior, and increase awareness of available mental health resources

Note: The enclosed guidance solely focuses on mental health and is not meant to be a substitute for all COVID-19 related communication. Stay up-to-date and compliant by regularly checking the following websites:

- NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- [Follow @Mentalhealthnyc](#) for regular updates on mental health resources that are available in New York City

As you get started, keep the following considerations in mind:

- Start with empathy and compassion towards yourself. Taking good care of yourself and managing your stress will bolster your efforts to help others.
- Maintain a strengths-based approach by focusing on your organization's ability to withstand the crisis, while recognizing the severity of the situation.
- Acknowledge that anxiety during COVID-19 is to be expected, and that a certain level of stress is a normal response to the current situation.
- Consider the widespread impact of COVID-19 and the many ways that it may impact employees; adapt your resources and policies as needed to support different experiences.
- Focus on overarching strategies to support the mental health of your workforce, as opposed to addressing individual mental health challenges on a case by case basis.

The COVID-19 Crisis and Workplace Mental Health Inequities

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the mental health of workers from across sectors and industries. A national poll found that 70% of workers feel more stressed during COVID-19 than at any other point in their entire professional career: 62% of workers reported losing at least one hour a day in productivity due to COVID-19 related stress and 32% reported losing more than two hours per day.¹

These challenges may be felt more acutely in some workplaces than in others. For example, small businesses and minority-owned businesses may be experiencing particularly dire financial circumstances as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, which can make it more difficult to provide job security and mental health benefits, or other forms of support to employees.

- In NYC, 50% of businesses employ 250 workers or less and qualify as small businesses.² Even before the current crisis, small employers were less likely than larger employers to offer medical insurance benefits to employees,³ which can facilitate vital access to mental healthcare when needed.⁴
- As a result of closures related to COVID-19, a poll found that over 50% of small business owners say they will not be able to continue their operations for more than three months,⁵ which can lead to acute financial and emotional distress.⁶
- Research has shown that Black and Latinx business owners are denied loans at a higher rate than their White counterparts, which may make economic recovery even more difficult.⁷

The mental health impact of the COVID-19 crisis will also disproportionately affect low-income and historically marginalized New Yorkers, many of whom are serving in essential roles supporting our City and the local economy during this pandemic.

- 75% of frontline workers in New York City are people of color,⁸ and many do not have the option to stay home. Working as nurses, bus drivers, grocery clerks and in other essential roles, places these employees at higher risk of contracting COVID-19, which can lead to increased anxiety⁹ related to fear of illness or death.
- Nonprofit workers who are delivering essential services in settings like homeless shelters and food pantries may be exposed to particularly high rates of vicarious trauma and stress.¹⁰

And, lack of hope, which is an important factor in recovery from mental health challenges,¹¹ will also influence employees' ability to cope: lack of hope was highest among Asians 68%, compared to Whites 64%, Latinx 59%, and Blacks 51%, suggesting different emotional reactions to the current challenge amongst different ethnic groups.¹²

As employers face unprecedented stressors during this time, some communities and workers will undoubtedly face more hardship than others. **The strategies in the guide promote the mental health of all employees without placing financial hardship on employers.**

The mental health services included on [page 16](#) of this guide can be accessed by any New Yorker, regardless of insurance coverage or immigration status. We encourage you to share these resources with your friends, colleagues, family members and loved ones who could benefit from mental health support during this difficult time.

Checklist: 7 Steps to Support Mental Health during COVID-19

- STEP 1:** Convene a small group of staff to create a common understanding of mental health, discuss current knowledge about employee mental health related to COVID-19, and assign tasks.
- STEP 2:** Update and share a list of mental health resources available to your employees.
- STEP 3:** Update and share workplace policies that have been modified because of the pandemic.
- STEP 4:** Demonstrate your commitment to the mental health of your employees, and communicate frequently about resources available to them.
- STEP 5:** Provide clear guidelines and expectations for working from home.
- STEP 6:** Create virtual opportunities for social support.
- STEP 7:** Prepare managers to support employees who may experience mental health challenges.

Checklist: 7 Steps to Support Mental Health during COVID-19



STEP 1: Convene a small group of staff to create a common understanding of mental health, discuss current knowledge about employee mental health related to COVID-19, and assign tasks.

It is essential to include diverse staff in crisis communication and management to ensure that your efforts are informed by an interdisciplinary perspective and that all employees are reached by your efforts. We recommend convening no more than three staff to facilitate coordination.

Potential staff include:

- Executive leadership
- Human resources
- Benefits administration
- Learning and development
- An employee representative

Once you have identified staff, consider the following:

- Have employees exhibited any behavioral changes since COVID-19 surfaced?
- What mental health concerns have employees and managers brought up?
- How can you sensitively collect information from employees about their mental health needs*?
- What resources are available to support employees' mental health?
- How might employees experience the pandemic differently based on their job function or demographics?
- Are your workplace policies in sync with public health, city, state and federal laws?
- What are the best ways to share timely and accurate information with employees?

NOTE: One way to collect employee information about their wellbeing and mental health is to conduct a short, anonymous survey. Please see **page 11** in [Thrive in Your Workplace's Toolkit](#) for additional guidance.

Checklist: 7 Steps to Support Mental Health during COVID-19

STEP 2: Update and share a list of mental health resources available to your employees.

Providing employees with accessible and up-to-date information about mental healthcare is one of the most important things employers can do to both support employees who are experiencing increased mental health challenges, and those who have a mental illness that may be exacerbated due to COVID-19.

While many employers offer a variety of mental health resources, employees are often unaware of these resources, unsure about how to access them, or feel uncomfortable asking for help. In addition, many insurance and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) have changed offerings to meet the increased demand for services during the pandemic. For example, telemedicine is now much more accessible than it was prior to the pandemic.

To ensure all your employees are able to get the help they need, start by assessing existing mental health resources. If you have any questions about your insurance coverage or EAP, reach out to your providers.

Questions to ask insurance providers include:

- Have there been any recent changes to mental health coverage in light of COVID-19?
 - Have any co-pays been waived for mental health services due to COVID-19?
 - While not directly related to mental health, knowledge about testing benefits may help reduce stress: does the insurance provider offer any guidance related to testing for COVID-19?
- Has the insurance provider developed any guidance about accessing mental healthcare, either generally or for COVID-19 in particular?
- Does the provider offer tele-mental health services and if so, how can employees access them?
- Is there any mental health programming (e.g. a webinar about stress management) employees can access through the insurance plan?

Checklist: 7 Steps to Support Mental Health during COVID-19

Questions to ask EAP providers include:

- Have there been any changes to our plan related to mental health support for COVID-19?
- How many free counseling sessions are included in the service?
- How can employees access the EAP (i.e. telephonic, email, and text support)?
- Are group crisis intervention services offered (i.e. support for employees after a traumatic event)?
- Is grief counseling included? If so, how many sessions are covered?
- If employees need assistance accessing food or financial support during this time, what types of resources do you offer?
- Does the EAP cover employees' family members?

In addition to identifying existing mental health services through your insurance plan and EAP, consider offering employees digital health tools, peer support programs or other ways to offer mental health support.

After updating your resource list, email your employees with a simple flyer so they have all pertinent information at their fingertips and feel encouraged to seek help.

Please see [page 16](#) for a sample flyer.



STEP 3: Update and share workplace policies that have been modified because of the pandemic.

Clear and regular communication about workplace policies are essential elements of leading with compassion and ensuring that employees' diverse needs are being addressed.

Start by reviewing current workplace policies to ensure that they are consistent with public health advisories, as well as city, state, and federal laws guiding employer responsibilities. As COVID-19 guidance is changing rapidly, employees who already feel anxious may feel even greater stress related to a lack of transparency or minimal communication from employers. You may also decide to encourage workplace flexibility to meet the evolving needs of employees whose caregiving needs for children, elderly or sick relatives change as the situation progresses.

The following types of workplace policies may be most relevant during the pandemic:

- Sick leave and short-term disability
- Family Leave
- Bereavement
- Caregivers
- Flexible scheduling

For information on current employment laws related to COVID-19, visit:

- [Department of Labor](#)
- [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)
- [New York Legal Assistance Group](#)

Please see [page 18](#) for sample workplace policies.



STEP 4: Demonstrate your commitment to the mental health of your employees and communicate frequently about resources.

Studies have shown that leadership behavior can influence the actions of employees and specifically, promote employee mental health. Leaders should communicate clearly and frequently about the importance of mental health during this crisis. Doing so may increase employees' comfort pursuing mental health support and reduce the possibility of false or confusing information about policies and benefits from circulating within the organization.

Employers should communicate about mental health resources at least quarterly under normal circumstances, and at least monthly during times of crisis. You can communicate efficiently over email, whether by creating your own template or borrowing from the template provided in this guide. You may choose to issue several emails rather than one long-form communication– the choice is yours. What matters is that employees have access to timely and relevant information.

Use non-stigmatizing language to discuss mental health, make a clear commitment to the wellbeing of employees, and include:

- A leadership statement about the importance of mental health
- Updates to relevant workplace policies, when applicable
- Information about mental health resources
- A communication plan for the duration of the pandemic (i.e. frequency of communication from leadership, where employees can find information/updates)

NOTE: Depending on the size of your workforce, you may also consider hosting an all-staff meeting to communicate with employees about mental health “in-person”. The language in the sample email template provided at the end of this toolkit could also be delivered as remarks.

Please see [page 17](#) for a sample email template.

Checklist: 7 Steps to Support Mental Health during COVID-19



STEP 5: Provide clear guidelines and expectations for working from home.

Working from home can be challenging for employees – whether because they have never done so, they relish in-person collaboration, or their home environments are not conducive to work – among many other possible reasons!

In particular, working remotely may be isolating and anxiety-provoking: The lack of physical boundaries can blur lines between home and work life, and distance from colleagues can create or add to confusion about responsibilities, not to mention that workplace priorities may be shifting as a result of COVID-19. Tone can be hard to read over email and phone, and be easily misinterpreted.

Needless to say, working from home can exacerbate mental health challenges, but there is good news: you can facilitate a successful transition by providing thoughtful recommendations.

Recommendations for Employees¹³

- Create and maintain a structured routine by mirroring your regular work schedule as closely as possible. Block out time for specific tasks and try to schedule meetings to provide structure and social connection. If you have trouble focusing, [the Pomodoro method](#) (working intensively for 25 minute bursts followed by rest time) is a popular, simple time management strategy.
- Create a physical space for work, especially if you don't have a desk at home. Identify an area to be used as your "office". Creating a dedicated space can help you stay organized and prevent work from seeping into your downtime.
- Be intentional about ending your workday by trying to put away your email, especially because workday and off-hours may begin to blend together working from home.
- While you work, practice mindfulness, which entails paying attention to the present moment on purpose. While we all may wish that things were different than they are, practicing meditation and breathing exercises can help us to regulate our emotional responses and manage heightened anxiety.
- Create a self-care plan. Build breaks into your day to eat, exercise, journal, pray, or to pursue activities that are nourishing to you.

Checklist: 7 Steps to Support Mental Health during COVID-19

Recommendations for Managers¹⁴

- Managers influence the level of stress experienced by their direct reports and should be especially cognizant of their behavior during challenging times.
- Take time to practice self-care to manage your stress, which can negatively impact the working conditions of the team.
- Lead with kindness and consider tone in both emails and meetings. Sending emails that are perceived to be aggressive or curt may increase anxiety, and discourage employees from asking for help when they need it.
- Meet with employees regularly to develop and monitor work plans with concrete timelines. Unclear responsibilities and lack of coaching can lead to frustration, increase conflict and accelerate burn-out.
- Be flexible and consider moving projects that are not time-sensitive. Doing so can reduce the burden on employees during this emotionally challenging time.
- Model strong work-life balance. Consider setting a hard deadline to log out for the day and encourage your employees to do the same.

Checklist: 7 Steps to Support Mental Health during COVID-19



STEP 6: Create virtual opportunities for social support.

Even though many of us are working remotely due to distancing measures, physical separation does not have to entail social isolation, which can increase loneliness and burnout.¹⁵ Providing a virtual forum for employees to connect about both work and non-work activities can promote unity and foster emotional wellbeing. There are a variety of ways to utilize virtual resources – such as teleconferencing tools, a messaging app, or old-fashioned phone calls – to build social support.

This could include:

- Sharing a prompt or photo of the day
- Setting up trivia and game nights
- Launching movie/ hobby clubs
- Virtual brown bag lunches
- Offering meditation sessions and fitness classes
- Hosting virtual talent shows

The COVID-19 crisis has also inspired some employers to create more formal workplace peer support programs.¹⁶ Specific peer support strategies for mental health include:

- **Empowering Employee Champions:** An employee champion is respected by both leadership and staff, passionate about mental health, and willing to be a mental health ambassador at your organization. Employee champions can wear many hats: they may be charged with creating virtual events to promote social support; breaking down mental health stigma through creative communication; promoting awareness of educational materials and new resources related to mental health; or importantly, becoming an internal expert on accessing mental health and COVID-19 resources.
- **Utilizing Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):** ERGs are affinity groups who represent a specific identity group (e.g. women, people of color, LGBTQ+) and are recognized as advocates and organizers by leadership. Many employers have begun creating mental health ERGs to increase their knowledge of employee mental health challenges, to identify responsive strategies and programs, and/or to provide a network of support. In the era of COVID-19, an ERG may also offer concrete tips about how to navigate mental health issues during the pandemic.

To learn more about developing a peer support program, you can view TWP's webinar [Building a Workplace Peer Support Program](#) (click and navigate to “Technical Assistance”) or download Mind Share Partner's toolkit [How to Create an ERG for Mental Health](#).

Checklist: 7 Steps to Support Mental Health during COVID-19



STEP 7: Prepare managers to support employees who may experience mental health challenges.

Managers often represent the primary form of support for employees. Developing managers' abilities to provide supportive supervision and to appropriately discuss mental health can help employees feel comfortable sharing concerns and accessing the care they need. Specifically, organizations can support managers in learning to:

- Recognize common symptoms of mental health challenges or mental illness, and how they can affect employees' wellbeing and performance, by viewing TWP and Mind Share Partner's [Supportive Management Practices Webinar](#) (click and navigate to "Technical Assistance")
- Discuss mental health in a compassionate manner by using active listening skills and validating language
- Connect the employee to organizational resources, particularly services related to emotional stress and COVID-19

Leaders can also strengthen their managers' effectiveness by:

- Recognizing that managers play a key role advancing leadership priorities while supporting staff, which may increase stress and require increased attention and compassion
- Ensuring that managers have the latest information about resources for mental health and COVID-19, and that they frequently update employees

For additional guidance designing your COVID-19 workplace mental health effort, please visit [Thrive in Your Workplace's website](#) or contact us at twp@thrive.nyc.gov to schedule a free consultation.

Appendices

I. Sample Flyer - Resources for Mental Health

[Employers should customize the content below to reflect their workplace offerings]

We are in an unprecedented situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The uncertainty, stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges you may be experiencing during this time can have long-term effects on overall health, particularly if left untreated.

We urge you to take advantage of the mental health resources available to you during this challenging time.

Mental Health resources are available through EMPLOYER:

- **Mental Health Coverage** is available through **EMPLOYER**'s health plan, which offers mental health and substance misuse coverage with modest copays. Employees can contact our health plan directly to request information: Website, Phone, Email
- **EMPLOYER** offers its employees and their dependents an **Employee Assistance Program**, which offers **XYZ** services and can be reached by emailing **X** or calling **Z**
- Tele-mental health services are available to employees via our partnership with **X**

City and State resources are also available for you and your loved ones:

- **NYC Well** offers free and confidential mental health support, via phone, chat or text, 24/7. NYC Well works to connect people to appropriate services regardless of insurance or immigration status. You can call 1-888-NYC-Well, text "Well" to 65173, or [chat online](#) for crisis counseling or a referral to a mental health provider.
- The **NYC Well App Library** shares high-quality apps and online tools to manage your health and emotional wellbeing: nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/app-library/
- The **New York State COVID-19 Emotional Support Line** is staffed by specially trained volunteers who can help. Call: 1-844-863-9314
- Support is available for people harmed by violence, crime or abuse: Safe Horizon operates NYC's 24-hour hotline providing one-on-one support to survivors of violence: 1-800-621-4673. You can also chat with a Safe Horizon advocate through **SafeChat**: safehorizon.org/safechat/
- For anyone needing resources to help themselves or a loved one experiencing dating, domestic, or gender-based violence, you can also visit the **NYC Hope Resource Directory**: www1.nyc.gov/nychope/site/page/home. For immediate safety planning, shelter assistance, mental health support, and other resources, call 311 to be connected to an **NYC Family Justice Center** for support by phone: www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/programs/family-justice-centers.page

Contact HR/People Team for more information: For additional guidance navigating the range of available mental health resources available to you, please contact **EMAIL**.

Appendices

II. Sample Email From Leadership to Employees

[Employers should customize the template below to reflect their organization's communication style]

Dear Colleagues,

The unprecedented and extraordinary challenges we are currently facing during the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted every facet of our lives as individuals, families, organizations, and communities. We know that these are anxious and stressful times and we are so thankful to each and every one of you for your dedication to our work.

While we have closed our office and are each doing our part to practice social distancing and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, we want to address a different but equally important part of this challenge: the impact of the current pandemic and social isolation on mental health. We believe that mental health is just as important as physical health. That's why we're making a commitment to do all we can to promote your mental health.

While there is no way to fully remove the stress and anxiety that is present in our everyday lives, we can work together to address mental health challenges that are associated with work. We can all play a role in prioritizing each other's mental health, by looking out for each other and taking part in creating a mental health friendly workplace.

Attached is a flyer that includes information on how to access mental health resources including benefits through our insurance provider and through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which offers free and confidential counseling for you and your families. In addition, we will continue to keep you updated at least weekly about any changes related to COVID-19.

If you're facing a mental health challenge – work-related or otherwise – you have our full support. You can speak to your manager, a trusted colleague, or HR with the confidence that your mental health concerns will be taken seriously. We are here to help.

Thank you for everything you bring to **EMPLOYER**. Please let us know if we can be of service to you during this difficult time.

Sincerely,
Employer leadership

Appendices

III. Sample Workplace Policies

Sample policies have been provided to help employers develop comprehensive workplace policies related to COVID-19 on common topics:

- (1) Emergency Paid Sick Leave
- (2) Emergency Family and Medical Leave
- (3) Work from Home Agreement
- (4) Telecommuting Agreement General Work Arrangements

Disclaimer: These are model workplace policies developed by People Strategy, an expert in human capital development. Thrive in Your Workplace is including these for the purpose of illustration, not endorsement.

Appendices: III. Sample Workplace Policies

(1) Template: Emergency Paid Sick Leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act Policy

Employer provides eligible employees with emergency paid sick leave under certain conditions.

Eligibility

All employees are eligible for emergency paid sick leave.

Reason for Leave

You may take emergency paid sick leave if you are unable to work (or telework) because:

1. You are subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
2. You have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine because of COVID-19;
3. You are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. You are caring for an individual or are advised to quarantine or isolate;
5. You are caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed, or whose childcare provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions; or
6. You are experiencing substantially similar conditions as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury.

Duration/Compensation Employees are entitled to:

- Full-time employees: 80 hours of pay at their regular pay rate. However, when caring for a family member (for reasons 4, 5, and 6 above), sick leave is paid at two-thirds the employee's regular rate.
- Part-time employees: Pay for the number of hours the employee works, on average, over a two-week period.

Paid leave under this policy is limited to \$# per day (\$# in total) where leave is taken for reasons 1, 2, and 3 described above (generally, an employee's own illness or quarantine); and \$# per day (\$# in total) where leave is taken for reasons 4, 5, or 6 (care for others or school closures).

Leave Rules

You may elect to use emergency paid sick leave before using any accrued paid leave. No leave provided by the Employer before DATE may be credited against your leave entitlement. In addition, emergency paid sick leave cannot be carried over after DATE.

Requesting Leave

If you need to take emergency paid sick leave, provide notice as soon as possible. Normal call-in procedures apply to all absences from work.

Retaliation

The Employer will not retaliate against employees who request or take leave in accordance with this policy.

Expiration

This policy expires on DATE.

Appendices: III. Sample Workplace Policies

(2) Template: Emergency Family and Medical Leave Policy (for employers with fewer than 500 employees)

Employer provides eligible employees with up to # weeks of emergency family and medical leave for a qualifying need related to a public health emergency.

Eligibility:

Emergency family and medical leave is available to all employees that have been employed by the Employer for at least # calendar days.

Reason for Leave:

Leave under this policy is limited to circumstances where you are unable to work (including telework) due to your need to care for your minor child because the child's school or place of childcare has been closed or is unavailable due to a public health emergency.

Requesting Leave:

If you need to take emergency family and medical leave, provide notice as soon as possible. Normal call-in procedures apply to all absences from work.

Compensation:

The first # days of leave are unpaid, but you may substitute accrued paid leave, including emergency paid sick leave. [You are required to use any accrued paid leave during the #-day period.]

The remaining # weeks are paid at # of your regular rate for the number of hours you would otherwise be scheduled to work (with a maximum payment of \$# per day and \$# total).

Restoration:

Upon returning to work at the end of leave, you will generally be placed in your original job or in an equivalent job with equivalent pay and benefits. You will not lose any benefits that accrued before leave was taken.

Appendices: III. Sample Workplace Policies

(2) Template: Emergency Family and Medical Leave Policy (for employers with fewer than 500 employees)

Important: Generally, eligible employees who take family and medical leave are entitled to be restored to the position they held when the leave commenced or to obtain an equivalent position with their employer. However, the law provides an exception for employers with fewer than 25 employees. In such circumstances, if an employee takes family and medical leave, the employer does not need to return the employee to their position if:

- The position does not exist due to changes in the employer’s economic or operating condition that affect employment and were caused by the coronavirus emergency;
- The employer makes “reasonable efforts” to restore the employee to an equivalent position; and
- If these efforts fail, the employer makes an additional reasonable effort to contact the employee if an equivalent position becomes available. The “contact period” is the one-year window beginning on the earlier of:
 - The date on which the employee no longer needs to take leave to care for the child; or
 - 12-weeks after the employee’s paid leave commences.

Retaliation:

The Employer will not retaliate against employees who request or take leave in accordance with this policy.

Expiration:

This policy expires on **DATE**.

Appendices: III. Sample Workplace Policies

(3) Template: Work from Home Agreement

This document specifies the terms and conditions of the Work from Home Agreement between [employee name] and [Employer], beginning on [date] and ending on [date].

Schedule

The days and hours when the employee is expected to be physically present in the workplace are [days] between the hours of [hours] and additional times designated by their supervisor.

1. The alternate work site is [address].
2. The days and hours when the employee is expected to work from home are [days] and [hours].
3. The employee's duties and responsibilities:
 - a. Will remain the same as when working at the regular Employer worksite; OR
 - b. The specific duties and assignments authorized to be conducted at this alternate worksite are [duties].
4. Effective communication is essential for this arrangement to be successful. The employee agrees to remain accessible during designated work hours. The following methods and times of communicating are agreed upon: [contact methods, individuals, required frequency of communication, etc.].
5. The Employer may terminate this agreement at any time, without notice, for any reason or no reason at all.

Policies and Procedures

1. All applicable Employee Handbook policies apply.
2. All employees must track and record their hours worked in the same manner required as when working at the regular Employer worksite.
3. Nonexempt employees:
 - a. Break and rest periods must be taken as required by law and/or Employer policy.
 - b. Requests to work overtime or to use sick leave, vacation, or other leave must be approved by the employee's supervisor in the same manner as required when working at the regular Employer worksite.
4. The employee agrees to and understands that all obligations, responsibilities, terms, and conditions of employment with the Employer remain unchanged, except those obligations and responsibilities specifically addressed in this agreement.

Safety, Equipment, and Information Security

1. The employee agrees to maintain a work environment that is ergonomically sound, clean, safe, and free of obstructions and hazardous situations.
2. The employee agrees to use Employer-owned equipment, records, and materials for Employer business only, and to protect them against unauthorized or accidental access, use, modification, destruction, or disclosure. The precautions described in this agreement apply regardless of the storage media on which information is recorded, the locations where the information is stored, the systems used to process the information, or the processes by which the information is handled.

Appendices: III. Sample Workplace Policies

(3) Template: Work from Home Agreement

3. The employee agrees to report to the **Employer** any instances of loss, damage, or unauthorized access at the earliest reasonable opportunity.
4. The employee agrees to allow electronic and/or physical access to their remote worksite for purposes of assessing safety, property maintenance, and security methods, as well as job performance.
5. The employee agrees to report work-related injuries to the supervisor at the earliest reasonable opportunity. The employee agrees to hold the Employer harmless for injury to others at the alternate work site.

Equipment, Furniture, and Supplies

1. The employee agrees that the following equipment, furniture, services (e.g., telephone, internet connection, etc.) and/or supplies will be supplied by the Employer: **[items provided and details of purchase, pick-up, delivery, set-up, maintenance, etc.]**.
2. The employee understands that all equipment, records, and materials provided by the Employer remain the property of the **Employer**.
3. The employee agrees to return **Employer** equipment, records, and materials within five business days of termination of this agreement.
4. Upon request, any **Employer**-issued equipment must be returned to the Employer by the employee for inspection, repair, replacement, or repossession within five business days.
5. All equipment, furniture, and/or supplies not listed in item one will be supplied and maintained by the employee.
6. The employee understands that their personal vehicle will not be used for **Employer** business unless specifically authorized by the **Employer**.

Taxes and Zoning Regulations

The employee understands that they are responsible for tax consequences, if any, of this arrangement, and for conformance to any local zoning regulations.

Employee Acknowledgment

I have read and understand this Work from Home Agreement. I understand that violations of this agreement may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Employee Signature: _____

Employee's Name (print): _____

Date: _____

Employer Representative Signature: _____

Employer Representative's Name (print): _____

Date: _____

Appendices: III. Sample Workplace Policies

(4) Template: Telecommuting Agreement General Work Requirements

Employees allowed to telecommute from home or off-site, for some or all of their employment, remain subject to the terms and conditions of employment set forth in the employee handbook and elsewhere.

In addition to their existing obligations and responsibilities, telecommuters agree to the following:

1. Maintain a regular work schedule and an accurate accounting of what you work on.
2. If you are nonexempt, do not work overtime without discussing with and getting authorization from your manager or supervisor.
3. Comply with all safety regulations that apply to an office. That means having a safe work environment free of clutter, exposed wiring, slippery surfaces, and other potential hazards. You should have a smoke detector, fire extinguisher, unobstructed exits, proper ventilation, and other basic safety precautions. The **Employer** may inspect the employee's workplace before telecommuting begins to ensure the designated off-site workplace is safe, ergonomically suitable, and free from hazards.
4. Understand that the policies and procedures relating to legal compliance, safety, and ethics obligations remain in full force and effect while off-site.
5. Be responsible for any **Employer** equipment used off-site. You may be responsible for the cost of repair or replacement of any equipment if not used or handled according to Employer policy. The Employer is not responsible for personal equipment used without express written authorization from the **Employer**.
6. Maintain your work files in a safe and secure environment. Any confidential materials, trade secrets, or proprietary information should be securely maintained and appropriately discarded.
7. Understand that any injuries that have occurred at home or off-site are covered by the Employer's workers' compensation insurance coverage. The reporting requirements for a telecommuter regarding a workplace injury are the same as if the employee worked on **Employer** premises.
8. Maintain a work environment that is free from distractions. This includes having proper day care assistance.
9. Understand that telecommuting can cause income tax consequences. It is your obligation to understand how your taxes will be affected.
10. Understand that there may be zoning laws in your area regarding home-based offices. You agree to comply with any local licensing requirements.
11. Understand that you are expected not to conduct child care, elder care, or similar duties during work hours.

Appendices: III. Sample Workplace Policies

(4) Template: Telecommuting Agreement General Work Requirements

12. You are expected to have appropriate homeowner's or renter's liability insurance for your home office, to furnish proof of such insurance on request, and to notify the Employer of any change in said insurance.
13. You are a representative of this **Employer** whether at a **Employer** location or off-site and are expected to represent the **Employer** appropriately.
14. The term of this agreement is from _____ to _____. Understand this does not alter the at-will nature of your employment and that the Employer may alter this agreement at any time.

My telecommuting location will be _____. If I intend to work at a different location, I will notify my supervisor and request permission to do so.

I understand and agree to all terms in this agreement:

Employee Signature

Date

Employee's Printed Name

Footnotes

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