



## Five Steps to Workforce Recovery

Many employers are taking steps to prepare for the reopening of business in the next couple months. The timing and impact for employers will vary depending upon industry, geography, supply and demand for products and services, and distribution channels. Even within an organization, the demand for work may look different from one department to another.

Here are five steps employer should consider as they plan for workforce recovery:

### Step 1: Conduct a Business Needs Assessment

- Each department/division should conduct a readiness assessment as to the type of work available, amount of work available, and timeline as to when work is available.
- Determine the staff needed to perform work by assessing which job positions and hours of work are needed now and in the future. Establish a timeline for how staff will be returned to work in phases based on increased workload.

### Step 2: Evaluate Employees / Human Resources

- Is the work able to be done by current active staff?
- Do you need to recall all employees from layoff? It is possible not all employees will need to be recalled if the business need does not support it. If recalling employees, keep these two key points in mind:
  - Use objective business criteria to determine which employees return (i.e. skills, cross-trained to perform multiple tasks, shifts, part-time vs. full-time, performance).
  - Employers should not use protected traits such as age, health, or whether an employee may need leave under the Families First Act as criteria for recalling employees.

### Step 3: Communicate to Employees

- Provide as much advance notice to employees being recalled, when possible. Communicate with a phone call first, then send a confirmation letter to document the recall.
- Plan your response to employees who do not return your calls.
- If recalling employees on a phased-in schedule, communicate to employees not being recalled at this time to explain the process used for determining the recall schedule and keep them engaged.

### Step 4: Assess Workplace Safety

What protective measures does your employer need to take to ensure the safety of employees as they return to the worksite?

Social distancing	Remote work	Staggered shifts
PPE (masks/gloves)	Taking temperatures	Increased cleaning/sanitizing
Reconfigure workspace	Education/wellness/hygiene	Suspend business travel
Update policies/procedures	Prohibit visitors	Increase ventilation
Installing barriers (shields)	Modify use of shared equipment	

### Step 5: Measure Employee Engagement

- Communicate often to employees to keep them informed about workplace safety and job security.
- Facilitate employee training to promote workplace safety. Include training for use of personal protective equipment to comply with OSHA requirements.
- Have a plan for accommodating employees who may have issues with work-life balance due to school/childcare closures or individuals with underlying health issues.
- Communicate with recalled employees how their benefits will be handled upon return to work. Will essential workers be incentivized to work with “Appreciation Pay” or “Hazard Pay”?



- Discuss how attendance, remote work, travel, and other policies may be relaxed in the coming months to allow employees flexibility, if applicable.
- Continue promoting personal hygiene and consider requests by employees to wear masks over their nose and mouth.
- Encourage staying home when sick and reporting any safety and health concerns.
- Conduct listening sessions or take pulse “temperature check” surveys to understand and address employee concerns.

**What happens when an employer takes these steps, and an employee refuses to come back to work?** For those situations, an employer can follow their normal absence process. In other words, any time an employee is away from work, an employer needs to know how they can apply any job-protected benefits, or employer-provided benefits to that absence.

For example, if an employee is sick or taking care of someone with an underlying serious health condition, does he or she have PTO or sick leave available, does emergency paid sick leave apply, or applicable STD or FMLA? If an employee has a preexisting mental health condition that may be affecting his or her ability to return to work, such as an anxiety disorder, an employer may ask questions, as with any ADA accommodation request, to determine what alternative accommodations may be effective. If an employee simply does not want to come to work, an employer may accept that as a voluntary termination. Absent qualifying reasons, that individual would not be eligible for expanded unemployment benefits and would need to seek other employment to continue working.

The road to recovery may take a while so employers who have a plan will be better prepared to manage any future uncertainty and change.