

Debevoise Coronavirus Checklists – Employee Communications

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As employers are planning for the impact of COVID-19 on the workplace, many employers—and individual supervisors—are questioning what they can and cannot say to employees. Here are ten “do’s” and ten “don’ts” to help employers and managers navigate sensitive communications with employees.

TOP 10 DO’S

- ✓ DO notify employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 the workplace, but maintain the confidentiality of employees’ medical information as required by law, including the medical status and identities of diagnosed employees or family members of employees.
- ✓ DO ask employees to inform management (i) if they are diagnosed with COVID-19, (ii) if they have been exposed to a diagnosed person or (iii) if they have traveled to a country on the CDC’s warning list for any reason in the prior 14-day period.
- ✓ DO encourage employees to stay home from work when they are feeling ill, and ask employees to leave the office if they are experiencing symptoms.
- ✓ DO follow-up with employees who indicate that they are ill to ask if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, chills or a cough.
- ✓ DO contact employees who are absent from work without explanation to inquire about their absence.
- ✓ DO communicate regularly with employees regarding the steps management is taking to ensure health and safety at the workplace.
- ✓ DO remind employees to practice good hygiene at work and provide concrete examples and guidelines tailored to the employer’s workplace and business (i.e., do not leave food out, wash hands, do not host visitors, etc.).

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- ✓ DO make clear to employees that discrimination or retaliation against employees who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 will not be tolerated.
 - ✓ DO direct employees to official government sources of information about COVID-19 when communicating about the virus with employees.
 - ✓ DO listen and be responsive to employees' direct questions and concerns.

TOP 10 DON'TS

- ✓ DON'T share an employee's confidential medical information with others.
- ✓ DON'T disclose the identity of an employee diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19.
- ✓ DON'T tell employees that they must obtain medical care.
- ✓ DON'T ask employees to disclose whether they have an underlying medical condition that may make them especially vulnerable to COVID-19.
- ✓ DON'T request that employees cancel personal travel plans.
- ✓ DON'T require employees not known to be sick to use sick days.
- ✓ DON'T comment on an employee's age, disability or susceptibility to contract the virus.
- ✓ DON'T make comments about other countries or ethnicities that could be perceived as discriminatory.
- ✓ DON'T threaten employees who are on medical leave with disciplinary action.
- ✓ DON'T spread rumors or unsubstantiated information about the virus.

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Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

New York



Tricia Bozyk Sherno
tbsverno@debevoise.com



Jyotin Hamid
jhamid@debevoise.com



Katie R. Aber
kraber@debevoise.com



Brooke J. Willig
bjwillig@debevoise.com