Employee Matters

POLICIES

DO YOUR POLICIES NEED UPDATING TO REFLECT THE COVID 19 AND POST COVID 19 WORLD?

As we find ourselves in this unusual situation, it's hard to remember what normal life was like just 6 months ago. It seems we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel, but it is important to accept the fact that life, as we knew it, isn't going to be around any time soon, if ever.

Therefore, it is crucial that you have the appropriate company policies in place to support your business and employees both now, and as we transition to the post COVID-19 world. It's important that you carefully review and update your current policies and assess whether you need to amend them or create any new policies to support your business.

The following are a list of policies for consideration:

SYMPTOM TRACKING

This is one you would have never considered in the pre COVID-19 world. If you are wanting to introduce temperature checking as part of your daily process, make sure it is documented in a policy.

SICK LEAVE

While a relatively obvious one, some serious consideration needs to be given to your sick leave policy. Like it or not, in days gone by, employees would quite often attend work when unwell. In the COVID-19 world, coming to work sick is no longer an option. Make sure your sick leave policy covers this, any new requirements and outline your expectations - i.e. sick leave or work from home. Ensure you have a documented process for employees returning to work after a period of sick leave. Most sick leave policies include a requirement for a doctor's certificate after 3 days absence. In the COVID-19 word consider the need for medical clearance prior to employees returning to the workplace after being unwell (particularly those who have been away with COVID-19 symptoms).

Make sure your policy covers the various scenarios in the COVID-19 world:

- An employee being diagnosed with COVID-19
- An employee being identified as a close contact
- An employee becoming unwell with COVID-19
- An employee undertaking COVID-19 testing
- A workplace shut down

You may consider implementing a separate COVID-19 policy which documents the processes the business will follow in each of the above scenarios - (some scenarios should already be captured in your COVID-19 Plan).

WORKING FROM HOME

There are a variety of policies that need to be reviewed now that a large proportion of the workforce may be working from home. You may need to adapt your policies to reflect either the whole or part of the workforce working from home. The policies to consider are:

- **Working from Home** - often working from home policies reflect this occurring on an ad hoc basis - make sure that your policy is focussed on the requirements and expectations longer term
- **Confidentiality** - ensure employees understand their continued obligation to maintain confidentiality while working from home. In particular, consider things like confidentiality when making and receiving phone calls and computer screen placement, while at home
- **Company Property and IP**- state your expectations around protecting against theft and unauthorised access and ensuring any company documentation is properly and securely stored - and destroyed appropriately
- **Dress Code** - reinforce the expectations when conducting business or attending meetings on Zoom while working from home
- **IT Policy** - this is a big one to look at! Consider your cyber security issues, the use of personal equipment and surveillance

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Are you open to your employees requesting ongoing flexibility in the post COVID-19 world? If so ensure your policy includes the processes your employees need to follow to request ongoing flexibility.

MEDIA

If you get a case of COVID-19 in your workplace, you may well find your company name in the media. Ensure your media policy includes a procedure for your employees to follow if they are contacted by the media.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

As our previous articles have identified, a lot has changed in this space and it's imperative you have updated your policies to reflect this.

In the next article, we will look at navigating a case of COVID-19 in the workplace.

If you need assistance updating or creating new policies to reflect the COVID-19 and post COVID-19 world, please book a **complimentary Discovery Session** with one of our Experts.