**SAMPLE: Temporary Remote Work Arrangements**

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak becomes more acute, many employers are considering temporary remote work arrangements. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is strongly encouraging all businesses to explore the possibility of providing flexible worksites (e.g., remote work arrangement) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others as state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies.

Businesses need to ensure that they have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees who may be able to work from home and a Remote Work Policy should be distributed so that employees are very clear on their responsibilities, including workspace set-up, work hours, etc. Businesses should also consider distributing a Remote Work Agreement whereby employees acknowledge understanding of the temporary remote work arrangement.

In general, temporary workplace policies should address:

* Equipment and supplies;
* Safety concerns;
* Existing corporate policies continue to apply;
* Requests for leave;
* Wage and hour issues, particularly regarding nonexempt employees; and
* The duration of arrangements.

During this pandemic, an employer may consider offering additional support, flexibility or pay to employees. For example, an employer may consider making extra payments to employees to help them transition to remote work. Consider offering a reimbursement to employees to upgrade their home internet connectivity up to a speed that is suitable to working from home.

These types of temporary, emergent measures should be communicated to employees as such, unless an employer anticipates making them available as permanent options.

Communication

By shifting to a remote working model during this pandemic, an organization will reduce its collective risk exposure within its facilities and employee populations. However, ongoing communications regarding business continuity concerns are vital during this time.

* Employees should be trained on where to find relevant information with respect to business continuity. An organization may include its emergency plans in employee handbooks, policy manuals and business plans.
* An employer should have mechanisms in place that will enable employees to obtain the latest communications on the pandemic. Circumstances during the pandemic may continue to change, such as by a local government issuing a shelter in place order rendering a business as nonessential and, therefore, precipitating a closure or temporary ceasing of operations.
* Consider distributing information about how your organization will communicate emergent issues. Provide guidance on the communication channels available to employees, which may include remote access to the employer's network and access messaging on the status of an emergency (e.g., by downloading an application with the relevant information or by using a local telephone number with an updated recorded message); and
* Ensure employees' contact information is updated by providing employees with an [Emergency Contact Form](https://www.xperthr.com/policies-and-documents/emergency-contact-form/6360/) or ask employees to provide emergency contact information in an email.

Support and Training

An employer should take steps to make each remote worker feel supported as a valued member of the greater team. This becomes more vital during a public health emergency.

In addition, an employer should support remote work by:

* Following best practices in terms of holding virtual meetings;
* Using and comparing online collaboration tools; and
* Recommending or adopting preferred applications for collaboration, communication and conferencing.

Think creatively about how to achieve business goals with remote workers. For example, focus on specific projects and output – i.e., a “results-oriented approach” as opposed to a focus on the number of hours worked.

Each employee should feel empowered to put in a full day's work but also have time for meals, opportunities to go outside, and meaningful breaks from projects. Frequent use of calendars, showing when everyone should be available for a conference call or when individuals prefer to be offline, will likely optimize a team's experience with remote working.

Any supervisors who are not used to managing a remote team should guard against making certain assumptions about workers, such as their level of technical proficiency or their likelihood to be more or less productive from home. These types of behaviors could affect overall morale and productivity. Train supervisors on the particular challenges that arise when [managing a remote team](https://www.xperthr.com/supervisor-training/managing-a-remote-team-supervisor-briefing/6923/).

Relaxed Work Rules

Encourage managers and supervisors to allow more flexibility with respect to work rules during a pandemic. Issues such as child-care and accessibility to a reliable network connection may keep employees from being as productive as they would like during usual work hours. However, a focus on well-being and support, rather than process and consequences, may benefit both employer and employee during a challenging business climate.

Focus on building a trusting relationship with employees so that productivity goals are achieved.

If certain processes or rules did not work as well as expected, or encouraged bad habits to form among remote workers, then make a note and tweak policies or handbook statements accordingly when the emergency has passed.