

## Coronavirus in the Workplace: Five Recommendations for Employers to Consider

March 9, 2020

The rapid spread of COVID-19 has ratcheted up the pressure on employers to address concerns in the workplace. Here are five important recommendations to consider.

- **Have a Plan in Place**

As confirmed cases of coronavirus continue to increase, employers should implement plans to identify and reduce the threat and risk of transmission among their workforce and minimize disruption to business operations. Employers should assess essential business functions and develop contingency plans in the event of a workplace closure or inability of employees to travel to work. A process should be established to timely and effectively communicate important information to employees. Employers should review telecommuting policies and prepare employees to work from home if feasible and necessary. Employers should provide guidance to their employees to insure that all work performed at home is tracked accurately.

- **Take Precautions in the Workplace**

If employees are required to work from the office, employers should take reasonable precautions to make sure the workplace environment is clean and safe. Employers should (i) provide basic hygiene products such as tissues, soap and hand sanitizer; (ii) enhance cleaning and sanitizing procedures to insure that all frequently touched services such as countertops, door handles and workstations are routinely cleaned; and (iii) remind employees to follow recommended good hygiene practices such as covering their mouth with a tissue if they cough or sneeze and washing their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

- **Encourage Sick Workers to Stay at Home**

The CDC recommends that employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness (cough, shortness of breath, fever) should stay at home until they are free of symptoms for at least 24 hours. Employees who exhibit these symptoms in the workplace should be separated from other employees immediately and sent home. Employers should maintain flexible sick leave

policies and communicate them clearly to all employees. Employers should implement procedures to respond to and monitor workplace absences.

- **Limit Nonessential Business Travel**

Employers should consider limiting nonessential travel, especially to known coronavirus hotspots. Employees who are returning from travel or live with someone who recently has returned from an area or country with known cases of coronavirus should be carefully monitored. In some instances, it may make sense to ask that employee to work from home. If appropriate, employers should ask employees about the details of any recent trips on a case-by-case basis.

- **Avoid Large Gatherings and Consumption of Communal Food**

The spread of the coronavirus in New York has been linked to one infected individual who may have exposed others at work and at community gatherings. Employers should advise workers to take precautions and avoid large gatherings. Employers also should reconsider offering communal food at office meetings and conferences and encourage employees to avoid sharing or leaving food out at their workstations.

### **A PROACTIVE APPROACH FOR EMPLOYERS**

Employers should be proactive and prepared with plans to protect their employees and their community, while at the same time, limiting interruption to their business operations. If you have any questions regarding these important considerations or other employment matters, please contact Felicia Ennis, any of the undersigned, or your regular Warsaw Burstein attorney.

Felicia S. Ennis	<a href="mailto:fennis@wbny.com">fennis@wbny.com</a>	(212) 984-7753
Martin R. Lee	<a href="mailto:mlee@wbny.com">mlee@wbny.com</a>	(212) 984-7868
Avi Lew	<a href="mailto:alew@wbny.com">alew@wbny.com</a>	(212) 984-7725

*This material has been prepared for informational purposes only, and is not intended to provide, and should not be relied on for, legal or tax advice. If you have any specific legal or tax questions regarding this content or related issues, then you should consult with your professional legal or tax advisor.*

**Warsaw Burstein, LLP** ([www.wbny.com](http://www.wbny.com)) and its attorneys are experienced business lawyers, regularly advising business owners, investors and entrepreneurs about business law, corporate and personal matters. The firm has the following practice areas: corporate/securities, private investment funds, banking and finance, exempt organizations, financial services, intellectual property, litigation, matrimonial and family law, real estate and construction, tax and trusts and estates. We have comprehensive experience representing a wide range of international, national and local businesses of all sizes, as well as many prominent families and individuals, in an extensive array of business and transactional matters.