

Returning to Work After COVID-19: Rights and Respect



There is a lot to think about when returning to work after a furlough. Here are just a few issues we are all facing. We all have **rights** and we all deserve **respect** as we move forward towards a fully integrated work environment.

1. RIGHTS*:

- a. **Fearing you might contract COVID-19 is not a legal reason to refuse to come back to work.** However, if you have a disability or pre-existing health condition, it might fall under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Contact your HR department for more details.
- b. **Do you have to wear a face mask?** Yes, the Equal Employment Commission has said that an employer can require employees to wear personal protective equipment, including face masks, during a pandemic.
- c. **What if I don't want my temperature checked?** Employers can check worker's temperatures, but the results are subject to confidentiality requirements. If you refuse one, you can be prevented from entering the building.
- d. **Does the employer have to notify staff if someone is diagnosed with COVID-19?** NO, but many are. If they do disclose a positive case, an employer cannot reveal the person's identity without consent.
- e. **Can my employer send me home if I am sick?** Yes, According to the EEOC, an employer can send an employee who is showing symptoms associated with COVID-19 home. If you see worried about a coworker that is showing signs of the virus, contact HR.
- f. **Can an employer require a doctor's note to return to the office?** Yes, employers can require a doctor's note for employees to return to the office.

2. RESPECT:

- a. **People will return to work with different levels of fear and anxiety.** There will be a natural social isolation that will occur in the beginning since this is all new to us. Respect boundaries and be patient. We'll get there together.
- b. **It is going to take time** for us to get back to the world we were used to living in. Respect the process of slowly integrating back to work. Breathe deeply when you feel frustrated and offer an ear to a coworker when you sense they need it. And, they in turn will do the same for you. We ARE all in this together.
- c. **Mentally this IS hard on everyone.** Studies are showing 35% of those who have never experienced stress and anxiety are now doing so with COVID-19. The weight of social isolation is real. We are social beings and being deprived of it does hurt our well being. If you see a coworker struggling, don't hesitate to recommend Best Care EAP services as a resource. **All sessions with a BCEAP counselor are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL. The COVID counseling help line is available 24/7, call (800) 801-4182.**

*Of course, every employer will have specific guidelines setup for returning to work, these are just a few general FAQ's. For more specific information, go to CNN's business link [here](#).