

# Returning to Work After COVID-19: Slow and “Safely” Wins the Race



**Ok, the saying really is “slow and steady”, but in COVID-19 times, “SLOW and SAFELY” are key to preventing future outbreaks and setbacks.** COVID-19 will continue to persist in our midst. We must be slow and vigilant in our return to working in the office. Like the turtle, if we practice safety and safely while we do so, we are more likely to make the transition to work a smooth one (without having COVID-19 make a return to threaten any progress we have already made.)

**Below are a few best practices:**

**Stagger employees returning to work.** Employers are in charge of letting employees know when they can return to work. It will be important to stagger start dates so that if you need to implement safety measures in your “open work environment” you have the time to do so. If employees all have their own offices, you will still have to make sure common areas are wiped down and sanitized daily, if not more. Make sure that when everyone returns, senior management is checking in with employees to make sure comfort levels are being met or if anything else can be done to ensure extra safety and security.

**Managing your team members still working remotely along with those back in the office might be a little tricky.** Schedule check-in sessions at first with everyone onsite as well as remotely. Transitioning your teams by keeping them up-to-date will add to the camaraderie you will need to get through the summer and fall. *You could also offer team members the chance to work in the office every other day, work from home the off days.* That way the workforce is returning every other day and you can still allow for social distancing to take place. The manager will then have the opportunity to check-in live vs. over a webex call, etc.

**Remain calm and wear a mask.** Requiring masks of workers for first month might help ease transition. The bottom line is we all need to stay healthy. Employees could wear masks in the office (in meetings, common areas, etc.) When in individual offices, employees could take masks off. Employers should have contingency plans for additional closures or restrictions, which may include additional furloughs, work-at-home arrangements, etc.

Throughout the remainder of 2020 and beyond, managers and HR personnel will be keeping abreast of updates from federal, state, and local governments, as well as guidelines from the CDC, the WHO, and state health departments. Throughout this process, good communication with employees will remain critically important.

This is not an easy time for any of us. If you feel anxious about returning to work or about COVID-19, call a Best Care EAP counselor. **All sessions with a BCEAP counselor are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL. The COVID counseling help line is available 24/7, call (800) 801-4182.**