RECOMMENDED ELEMENTS OF A SICK POLICY

During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses should reduce the risk of virus transmission between staff and customers. One of the most critical elements of this process is implementing a flexible yet strict sick policy, designed to identify staff members at risk of having COVID-19 based on their symptoms, exposure status, and/or travel history.

Staff members should be informed of the policy and told about the conditions under which they should not report to work, which should include:

- Have fever or respiratory symptoms
- Live in a household with someone exhibiting fever or respiratory symptoms who either has not been tested for COVID-19 or tested positive for COVID-19
- Has had direct contact with a laboratory-confirmed positive case
- Has recently traveled to an area where there is wide, sustained community spread or an outbreak/ cluster of COVID-19

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from childcare or school.

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

- o Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission websites).
- o Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to cope with the impact of this pandemic.