While employers may need to tailor their company's COVID-19 return to work plan to local regulations and employees' specific needs (e.g., child care arrangements, caregiving responsibilities and underlying health issues), having a generalized plan in place can help businesses safely reopen.

Provided by:
Schechner Lifson Corporation

Return to Work Plans Following the COVID-19 Pandemic

In preparation for reopening after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it's imperative that companies thoughtfully construct a return to work plan for employees. Return to work plans should be tailored to unique business needs and follow local and state regulations.

With an established return to work plan, employers can enjoy increased employee engagement and productivity, proactive cost containment, reduced turnover, increased communication and improved morale.

As stay-at-home regulations are scaled back and all businesses are allowed to resume as normal, your employees will be asked to come back to work. Your COVID-19 return to work plan should include the following:

- **Anticipated return to work date**—While being flexible as local and state orders frequently change, provide clear information and dates for when employees are to return to work.
- **Disinfecting and cleaning measures**—Because COVID-19 can remain on surfaces long after they've been touched, it's important that your business frequently cleans and disinfects your facilities.
- **Social distancing protocol**—Best practices include maintaining at least 6 feet of distance from others, hosting meetings virtually and limiting the number of people on the job site to essential personnel only.
- **Employee screening procedures**—To keep employees safe, consider identifying potentially ill employees before they enter the office. You can learn more about temperature screening in the next article.
- **Employee safety training**—It's important to provide guidance to ensure that all employees understand how they can prevent the spread of COVID-19 through respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, personal protective equipment and staying home when sick.
- **Mental health considerations**—The COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress levels of employees across the country. It's important to plan for managing mental health concerns when employees return to work.
- **Process for individualized requests**—Be flexible and compassionate in your response to employee requests that have arisen as a result of the pandemic.

The CDC's fever measurement is 100.4 F.

Employers should consider using that as the threshold for when to bar an employee from entering the workplace.
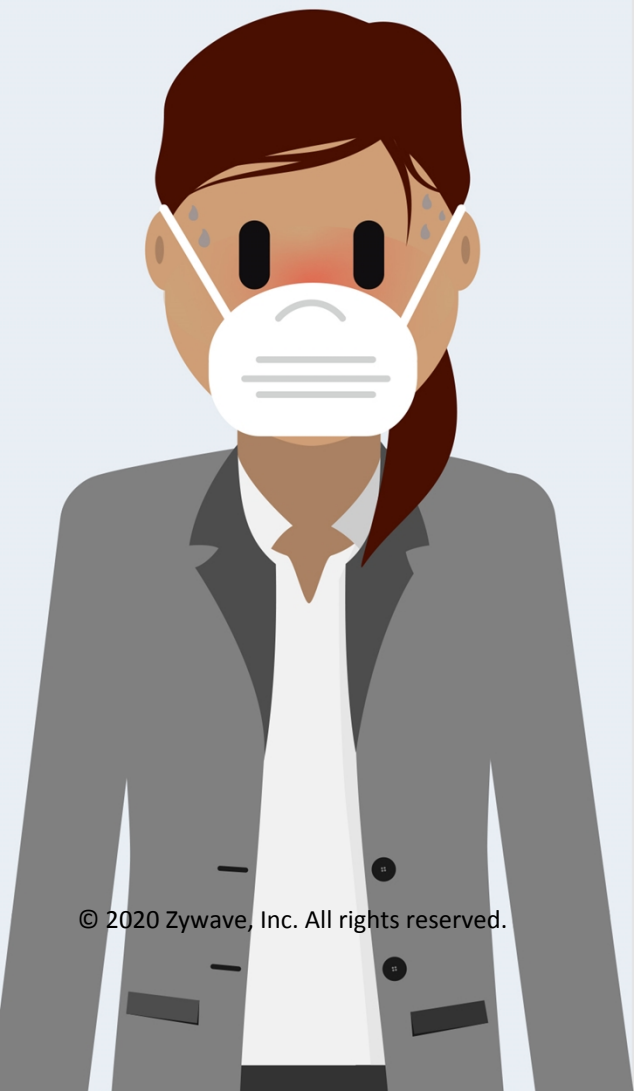
Contact Schechner Lifson Corporation today to learn what actions you need to take to ensure your employees' return to work is as safe and seamless as possible.

Screening Employee Temperatures Upon Return to Work

Many employers are wondering how they can protect their employees from the spread of COVID-19 once they're allowed to return to work. This is causing many employers to consider taking employee temperatures as a precaution upon entering the workplace.

Generally, measuring an employee's body temperature is a medical examination. Because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state and local health authorities have acknowledged community spreading of COVID-19 and issued precautions, employers may measure employees' body temperature. However, employers should be aware that some people with COVID-19 do not have a fever.

If an employer requires all employees to have a daily temperature check before entering the workplace, the employer may keep a log of results. It's important to maintain the confidentiality of that information.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all medical information about a particular employee be stored separately from the employee's personnel file, thus limiting access to this confidential information. An employer may store all medical information related to COVID-19 in existing medical files. This includes an employee's statement that they have the disease or suspect they have the disease, or the employer's notes or other documentation from questioning an employee about symptoms.

BEST PRACTICES

If an employer conducts employee temperature testing, they should comply with all official rules including, but not limited to, the ADA and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Here are some other tips to keep in mind:

- Communicate the plan to take employee temperatures well in advance and explain why.
- Be sure employees understand the implications of such a test (i.e., a high temperature means being sent home).
- Have a set temperature threshold and stick to it.
- Consider using no-touch thermometers.
- Utilize properly trained medical staff or facilitators to administer the temperature checks.
- Make sure the temperature checking stations are far enough from the workplace entrance and have proper social distancing setups.

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- Maintain proper disinfecting procedures at the testing station and within the workplace as a whole.

Speak with Schechner Lifson Corporation for more workplace guidance.