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Policy Considerations Regarding COVID-19

The purpose of a Policy about the COVID-19 (or any significant health/safety risk/concern) should be to inform employees on how an organization will handle the COVID-19 situation today and going forward in order to protect employees and meet business needs while continuing to plan, grow and prosper during such situations.

First and foremost an organization's policy should emphasize good hygiene above all else. This is the number one way to prevent the spread of this disease (and others).

The Policy should clearly state that the organization will continue to communicate with employees regarding COVID-19 updates that become available and include information that the employee can access such as the following (to help employees stay up to date on the latest developments around COVID-19):

- **Center For Disease Control**: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html
- **World Health Organization**: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
- **Kent County Health Department**: https://www.accesskent.com/Health/coronavirus.htm

In addition to the communication and transparency focuses mentioned above, a good policy should include a concise listing of measures that will be implemented to help combat the spread of illness. These measures should include the following:
- Alcohol based hand sanitizer should be provided at multiple sites throughout the facility.

- Employees may be allowed to bring their own approved sanitation tools if they would like (masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, etc.) as long as their use does not interfere with the completion of all assigned job tasks and responsibilities.

- Alcohol based wipes should be made available to wipe down surfaces. The policy should state that these wipes should be used freely on all things like desk tops, counters, phones, door knobs, etc.

- Facial tissues should be provided and a brief statement about proper use and disposal should be included.

- The policy should state that employees should wash their hands frequently with soap and warm water for 20 seconds to be sure to get rid of all the germs. Employees should also be told to minimize touching their face with their hands and, if they do, to wash their face with warm water and soap as well.

- An effective policy should state that a thorough environmental cleaning of the facility on an as needed basis will be done. (Those who clean the facility should be provided with all needed equipment and supplies to minimize their exposure.)

- If you are planning to adopt a more flexible view of attendance policy (on a temporary basis) that should be stated including what might initiate such utilization (most will encourage employees who are sick to not come to work or to work from home if that is possible).

- An effective policy will address how employees, customers, clients and vendors, etc., should be greeted. In light of what has been learned about how COVID-19 is spread a policy should strongly encourage using another form of greeting one another instead of a handshake, such as a wave, elbow, "virtual" shake, fist bump, etc.

- Supervisors and managers should be encouraged to work with HR to send home employees who exhibit signs and symptoms of acute respiratory illness and ask them to stay home until they are "symptom free" for 24+ hours.

- All company vehicles should be cleaned and supplied with alcohol-based hand sanitizers to be used when getting into and out of vehicles and this expectation should be clearly defined and enforced.

- A statement of how staff will receive communications and/or notifications should there be any need to adjust schedules and/or production to accommodate numbers of employees available to work or if the organization needs to shut down (or amend) operations should be included.

- Within any policy the actions that will be taken should an employee have a confirmed case of COVID-19 the organization should be clearly defined. Any actions should include the immediate notification of local health officials.

- A statement about trainings, travel and other social event attendance should be made that limits exposure or changes the format should be made within the policy.

- Employees should be encouraged to implement the practices outlined within the organization's policy in their homes and neighborhoods in order to reduce the likelihood of being a "carrier" of the virus.

A definition of terms being used in the media for different strategies used to slow or stop any viral outbreak should be included. These terms currently include:
- Isolation: Separating those with confirmed infections from other people, so that they can get better without infecting anyone else.

- Quarantine: Restricting the movement of, or isolating, people who might have been exposed to an infection but who aren't yet sick.

- Social Distancing: A slew of tactics meant to keep people from congregating in large crowds, to slow the spread of a virus.

An all-inclusive policy should include other procedural considerations being looked at including:
- How to handle potential refunds for any services not provided and/or non-delivered product due to the effects of the virus on staffing.

- Reviewing company travel plans (both past and future) for any visits to high risk destinations and work to find alternative means of business continuity.

- Asking employees to consider how they are handling personal travel for the predictable future. With spring break coming up consider the effects of those employees when they *return* from many various places. Conduct a refresher course prior to them leaving and immediately after returning.