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Abstract

The following is a sample policy that businesses can utilise to inform their response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. It may be adapted to suit the needs of your business and circulated to employees.

Barbados Employers’ Confederation

Sample Safety and Health Policy: COVID – 19



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# Introduction

### What is COVID – 19

Coronavirus (CoV) refers to a family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). SARS-CoV-2, also known as 2019-nCoV or the Wuhan coronavirus, is a novel or new coronavirus that was first identified in humans in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

###  How COVID-19 Spreads

* The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
* Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
* Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
* Like the flu, COVID-19 is spread primarily via respiratory droplets—little blobs of liquid released as someone coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are or nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

**Here are some common****symptoms of infection**:

* Cough
* Runny or Stuffy Nose
* Sneezing
* Sore Throat
* Fever
* Headache
* Fatigue
* Chills
* Body Aches

### What are the possible complications from COVID-19?

* Acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)
* Irregular heartbeat (Arrhythmia)
* CardiovascularShock
* Severe Muscle Pain (Myalgia)
* Fatigue
* Heart Damage orHeart Attack

### How to prevent the spread of COVID-19

* The best way to prevent the spread of this virus is to avoid or limit contact with people who are showing symptoms.
* The next best thing you can do is practice good hygiene to prevent bacteria and viruses from spreading.
* Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds at a time with warm water and soap.
* Don’t touch your face, eyes, nose, or mouth when your hands are dirty.
* Cover your mouth with the inside of your elbow whenever you sneeze or cough. Throw away any tissues you use to blow your nose or sneeze right away.
* Keep any objects you touch a lot clean. Use disinfectants on objects like phones, computers, utensils, dishware, and door handles.

## Employer Responsibility

As an employer, a company is responsible for providing all employees with a safe and healthy work environment. This includes taking steps to guard against the risk of infectious diseases; the outbreak of this new virus should prompt employers to implement a strategy to protect employees, customers and the general public. A detailed plan can help employers and managers to comply with legal obligations and will evidence the steps the company has taken to try to protect against an outbreak at work and what steps will be followed in order to minimise and mitigate against its impact. The Company expects all employees to exercise safe work habits and maintain their work areas and materials in an organized and hygienic manner. We aggressively enforce all workplace health, safety, housekeeping and security rules; and violations of these rules will result in appropriate action.

## Employee Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the employee to cooperate with the Company to exercise safe work habits and maintain their work areas and materials in an organized and hygienic manner. To take reasonable care for their own health and safety, to take reasonable care for the health and safety of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions, cooperate with anything the employer does to comply with requirements not 'intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse' anything provided at the workplace.

## Policy Implementation and Maintenance

The Company will review and adjust this policy to reflect changes in policy or understanding according to the Company and other stakeholders. Any issues related to this policy can be discussed with your Head of Department or the General Manager to address your concerns.

## Scope

This policy applies to all management and staff.

## Expected Outcome

To ensure the Safety and Health of employees and visitors during the Coronavirus pandemic. This means implementing systematic protocols that will assist in preventing the contracting and transmission of the virus. The procedures also seek to raise awareness on good hygiene practices and step by step reporting methods for suspected cases.

## Hygiene Practices

These hygiene practices form part of the already established policies and procedures in our Company handbook and your contract of employment;

1. Clean and sanitize workstations including telephones and computers
2. Wash hands frequently with soap and water or with hand sanitizer if there is no soap or water available.
3. Avoid touching noses, mouths and eyes.
4. Cover nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue, or cough and sneeze into pit of elbow or upper sleeves, if tissues are not available.
5. Wash hands or use a hand sanitizer after coughing, sneezing or blowing noses.
6. Avoid close contact with co-workers and customers (maintain a separation of at least 6 feet).
7. Avoid shaking hands and always wash hands after contact with others. Even if employees wear gloves, they should wash hands upon removal of the gloves in case hand(s) become contaminated during the removal process.
8. Avoid using other employees’ phones, desks or other work tools and equipment.

**Cleaning Practices**

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, handrails, and faucet handles. Frequency may be increased when there is a known outbreak. Immediately clean and disinfect surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids to avoid contact. Do not underestimate the power of simply cleaning to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 viruses as well as other pathogens.

Most studies have shown that the flu virus like COVID-19 can live and potentially infect a person for only 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on a surface. Therefore, it is not necessary to close facilities to clean or disinfect every surface in the building to slow the spread.

If a surface is not visibly dirty, you can clean it with a product that both cleans (removes soil and germs) and disinfects (kills germs) instead. Be sure to read the label directions carefully.

Use disinfecting wipes on electronic items that are touched often, such as phones and computers. Pay close attention to the directions for using disinfecting wipes. It may be necessary to use more than one wipe to keep the surface wet for the stated length of contact time. Make sure that the electronics can withstand the use of liquids for cleaning and disinfecting.

Use products safely. Pay close attention to hazard warnings and directions on them. Cleaning products and disinfectants may call for the use of gloves or eye protection. Do not mix cleaners and disinfectants unless the labels indicate it is safe to do so. Combining certain products (such as chlorine bleach and ammonia cleaners) can result in serious injury or death.

## Personal Sanitizing of Hands

### Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

Washing your hands is easy, and it’s one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading.

***Follow these five steps every time.***

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

**How to use hand sanitizer**

1. Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds

## Social Distancing at Work

These simple, common sense actions help reduce risk to you and to others. The more space between you and others, the harder it is for the virus to spread.

* Stop handshaking as a greeting
* Hold meetings via video conferencing or phone call
* Defer large meetings
* Hold essential meetings outside in the open air if possible
* Take lunch at your desk or outside to reduce lunchroom congestion
* Consider opening windows and adjusting air conditioning for more ventilation
* Limit food handling and sharing of food in the workplace
* Promote strictest hygiene among food preparation (canteen) staff and their close contacts

## Procedure If You Are Feeling Ill

1. Do not report for work if you are experiencing any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19. Immediately contact your Supervisor or Department Head.
2. If you are at work when symptoms first appear, immediately go to a closed office, sick bay or Conference Room.
3. Persons should immediately report any cold / flu like symptoms to a member of staff or Department Head.
4. Based on the report, Management will notify the Local Health Authorities a:

**COVID – 19 HOTLINE:** 536-4500

## Persons Showing Signs and How to Attain Information

The following information provides guidance for attaining information from persons showing signs of illness. Employees should attain the information maintaining the procedures outlined for social distancing, cleaning and hygiene.

If someone around you shows signs of being ill, the question should be asked “By Name”:

* Are you feeling unwell?
* If the answer is yes, then ask them the nature of their illness
* Following their response, you will know if to proceed to ask the following:
* Do you have a cold?
* Do you have a fever?
* How long have you been feeling unwell?
* Did you travel lately? To which countries?
* Have you been in contact with someone who had a suspected/confirmed case of COVID – 19?
* Their response should immediately be reported to Management for a final decision.
* Based on the decision, and quarantine is warranted, the person MUST be advised that due to the protocol in place by the Ministry of Health & Wellness because of the COVID-19 Virus any suspicious cold symptoms must be reported to them and that persons isolated.

## Returning to Work

Employees with confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis will be required to produce a certificate of good health before returning to work.

## Travel

Non-essential travel should be postponed. Employers should restrict employees from traveling to high-risk destinations as advised by the WHO and Barbados Government, unless necessary. Should travel be unavoidable then proceed with the following procedures.

**Before traveling:**

* Make sure your organization and its employees have the latest information on areas where COVID-19 is spreading. You can find this at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>
* Based on the latest information, your organization should assess the benefits and risks related to upcoming travel plans.
* Avoid sending employees who may be at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. older employees and those with medical conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease) to areas where COVID-19 is spreading.
* Make sure all persons travelling to locations reporting COVID-19 are briefed by a qualified professional (e.g. staff health services, health care provider or local public health partner)

**While travelling:**

* Encourage employees to wash their hands regularly and stay at least one meter away from people who are coughing or sneezing.
* Ensure employees know what to do and who to contact if they feel ill while traveling.
* Ensure that your employees comply with instructions from local authorities where they are traveling. If, for example, they are told by local authorities not to go somewhere they should comply with this. Your employees should comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement or large gatherings.

**When you or your employees return from travelling:**

* Employees who have returned from an area where COVID-19 is spreading should monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day.
* If they develop even a mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate. This means avoiding close contact (one meter or nearer) with other people, including family members.
* They should also telephone their healthcare provider or the local public health department, giving them details of their recent travel and symptoms.

**NOTE**: It is important during this pandemic that all parties follow advice from health authorities. This includes, Ministry of Health and Wellness, World Health Organisation, Pan American Health Organisation and Caribbean Public Health Agency.