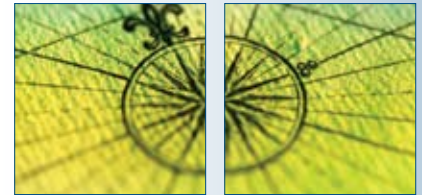


client advisory bulletin

Is Your Organization Ready for the H1N1 Virus?

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H1N1 Virus The H1N1 Virus has made front page news for several months and is expected to continue to make headlines. Keeping up with news about the virus – or at least the news that impacts your organization – is vital to maintaining the smooth operation of your business and the health of your employees.

While there's an immense amount of information available about the H1N1 Virus, it's likely you don't have time to wade through all of the stories and advisories that are posted daily. You simply want to know the latest updates on the virus; methods of preventing its spread; how your policies, procedures, and benefits are affected; and how to communicate effectively with employees during the pandemic.

Get the News You Need to Know

In addition to the Centers for Disease Control, employers can turn to local health departments for information about current statistics related to the spread of the H1N1 Virus. Local news stories will also keep you up-to-date on outbreaks, school closings, etc. The CDC's website offers a variety of resources for employers, including advice on preventing outbreaks.

The CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu or www.flu.gov offers information and tips to guide employers through the flu season. Additional publications are available through the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's (OSHA) website: <http://www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/pandemicflu/index.html>.

If you have questions about the H1N1 Virus, you should call the CDC at 1-800-232-4636 (available 24/7) or contact your county health department.

Take Time Now to Check Policies and Procedures

An outbreak of the virus in your organization – and even in your community – will bring with it absenteeism. Along with the employees who become sick with the H1N1 Virus, there will be others who need to be at home caring for ill family members or watching children whose school is closed due to an outbreak.

Review policies that govern employees' time off: sick leave and paid time off programs, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and short-term disability plans. Determine if your health plan covers the H1N1 Virus vaccination. Be prepared to answer questions employees may have about benefits available to them during a flu outbreak.

Managers should understand how the plans work in the event of an outbreak. Supervisors need to be aware of the business pandemic plan procedures, and if your business has more than one location, the local manager should have authority to put the pandemic plan into action if needed. Alternative work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flexible schedules, and eliminating in-person meetings, should be part of the plan.

Managers should not hesitate to check on the health of their employees at the beginning and end of each workday – making sure employees do not have flu-like symptoms such as chills, fever, sore throat or cough. Screenings must be conducted in a neutral and non-discriminatory manner.

It is recommended to know in advance your organization's typical absentee level during the normal flu season (fall and winter). This will help you assess increases in absenteeism and determine its effect on business operations.

About Findley Davies

Findley Davies works with companies interested in maximizing the effectiveness of their human resources strategies. They specialize in helping clients attract and retain talent, enhance the effectiveness of HR processes, leverage technology, improve financial performance through effective management of costs, and structure solutions that drive organizational change.

Established in 1969, Findley Davies is owned by a group of senior consultants working from offices in Charlotte, Cleveland, Columbus, Greensboro and Toledo. Its consultants, actuaries, and administrators are accomplished professionals with proven track records in HR, ERISA and tax law, retirement plans, actuarial science, compensation and rewards, communications, health and group insurance, and HR Innovation.

Comments and Questions

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Communicate with Employees

There are several key messages you need to deliver to your employees before and during a flu outbreak. Your employees should:

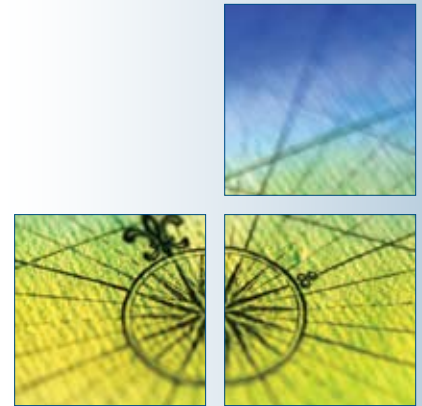
1. Take steps to prevent infection through proper hygiene: Get the seasonal flu vaccination and the H1N1 Virus vaccination. Keep work areas clean. Use hand-sanitizers to prevent the spread of the virus. Use the proper coughing and sneezing protocols.
2. Understand the company's policies and procedures during a flu outbreak.
3. Recognize the symptoms of the flu. Don't confuse them with a common cold. If you have flu-like symptoms and a fever, you should not come to work.
4. Be prepared to be separated from other workers if you come to work with flu-like symptoms – or become ill during the workday – and you'll be told to go home until the fever has passed.
5. Let your manager know if you need to miss work because you are sick with the flu.

The CDC recommends that employers prepare to communicate with employees and business partners about rumors, misinformation, fear, and anxiety related to the H1N1 Virus.

Next Steps

1. Evaluate your organization's current policies for a pandemic. If you don't have a policy, develop one that fits your organization.
2. Keep updated on local flu outbreaks, those affecting your organization's other locations, and those of your business partners.
3. Develop and deliver effective messages to your employees. Education and prevention can reduce panic and the spread of illness in your workforce.

Before implementing any of these recommended actions, we suggest that you review the steps with your trusted advisor. Findley Davies can provide assistance in reviewing and developing policies, procedures, and communications customized to your organization's needs.



About the Author

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