Considerations for a Safe Return to Work

#WeGotThis

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Polling Question
Polling Question
Agenda

• Explore how recent events can evoke feelings of fear, anxiety, loss, depression, and isolation.
• Review common return to work issues and also comply with state and federal laws.
• Q&A
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Topics

• Unexpected change, transition, and trauma
• Challenges of working in a different environment
• Working in the new norm
• Virtual challenges
• Plan for an effective remote work environment
• Behaviors in the workplace
• Emotional responses
• Supporting colleagues and staff
• Resilience
• Silver linings


**Transition Model by William Bridges**

*Change occurs* when something new starts or when something old stops; it takes place at a particular point in time. It is an external source.

*Transition* is the internal psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation or change. It is the internal reaction of coping with the external change.

*Successful transitions* start with the pain of endings, progress through the confusion and chaos of the change and emerges as the excitement of the new beginning.
The Roller Coaster of Change

Change is announced

High expectations
Shock
Mourning
Fight/Flight
Disorientation
Nostalgia
Turmoil, rage
Guilt, depression
Feelings of loss
Needing to let go
Detachment
DECISION

Realistic expectations
Excitement
Reattachment
Testing
Internal commitment
Hope
Finding new structures
Refining purpose
Problem solving
Focused study
Informed choice
Focused exploration
Search for the new

Present ——— Time ——— Future
Impacts of Unexpected Change and Trauma

- Awareness of individual’s physical and mental health triggers or psychological reactions
- Dealing with the unknown
  - How will this affect the work environment and my job?
  - Change to routine
- Ongoing news cycle
- Pandemic anxiety
- Community trauma
- Economic impact
- Uncertain future
- Recognizing anticipatory grief: what we think/know will change
Working in a “New Norm”

• Remote working
  • Keep routine and have a plan
  • Private work space
  • Consistent breaks and focus on self care
  • Create structure for kids/family at home
  • Create boundaries
  • Have dialogue about expectations and needs (flexibility, support, etc.)
  • Prioritize personal time and time with family and friends

• Return to work environment
  • Discuss concerns (ensure safety plan)
  • Create a return to work plan
  • Demonstrate flexibility and support
  • Regular communication and updates
Polling Question
Virtual Challenges

- Energy from direct contact with another person or group of people
- Virtual frustrations and stressors
- Loss of personal contact
- Self complexity theory
- Virtual fatigue or “Zoom fatigue”
- Minimize fatigue
  (day per week off from virtual conversations, use of phone, etc.)
Behaviors in the Workplace

• Heightened emotions, reactions or behavioral changes
• Disengaging or a lack of participation
• Increased tension or conflicts with others
• Changes in productivity
• Performance issues
• Absenteeism
• Increased health or physical issues
Emotional and Physical Signs

- Recognize signs of isolation (or lack of engagement)
- Change in mood
- Emotional triggers (example of ME office)
- Heightened irritability, conflict or tension with others
- Excuses for withdrawal of unavailability
- Existing mental health issues may be exacerbated (depression, anxiety, paranoia)
- Physical responses
- Excessive feelings of fatigue
- Memory retention
- Difficulty concentrating or confusion
- Sensitivity to noise and/or light

It is often more challenging to recognize these in a virtual workplace
Supporting Staff and Colleagues

- Consistent communication (updates, staff meetings, 1:1)
- Demonstrate active listening
- Show compassion and empathy
- Understanding the brain/body connection
- Normalize the situation (reaffirm the unusual nature of the situation)
- Work with staff to accommodate and demonstrate flexibility when possible
Supporting Staff and Colleagues

• Time off and provide additional mental health resources (first responders, police departments, etc.)
• Make time for check-in’s and create a safe space for conversation
• Discuss a return to work plan (if that’s the plan)
• Create a supportive and welcoming environment
• Share information about the EAP or other support resources
Dealing with Trauma

• Grief and loss related to recent events (George Floyd death, community violence, loss of hope, justice, perceptions about safety)
Resilience

Adaptability
- Coping skills
- Creative problem solving
- Time management
- Prioritizing
- Accepting change

Workplace Characteristics
- Build/strengthen your support network
- Consider where you have control
- Find satisfaction and meaning in your work
- Consider the new norm and how to make it workable for you

Health
- Recognize both physical and emotional health
- Self care
- Exercise
- Mindfulness

Personal Life
- Self awareness
- The world around you
- Make time for what’s important
- Be of service
- Practice gratitude and mindfulness
Recognize the Silver Linings

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE THINGS THAT HAVE OCCURRED WITH THE RECENT CHANGES IN YOUR PERSONAL AND WORK LIFE?

WHAT NEW ACTIONS OR BEHAVIORS WILL YOU CONTINUE TO PRACTICE GOING FORWARD?

HOW WILL YOU CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF SO YOU DO NOT FALL BACK INTO OLD HABITS?
The Legal Aspects of Employees Returning to Work

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Goal: Smooth Sailing in Unchartered Waters

- Be flexible
- Be reasonable
- Be analytical
- Avoid knee jerk responses
- Refresh knowledge regularly
- Document, document, document
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
Goal: Smooth Sailing in Unchartered Waters

- Health screenings
- Masks, PPE, etc.
- Reasonable Accommodations

- Other issues (but not our focus today): New laws re: leave, medical exams/inquiries, etc.
1. Implement Preparedness Plan (6/29)
2. Work from home if possible (EO 20-74)
3. Comply with ADA, FMLA, FFRCA (EPSLA & EFMELA), MHRA, MNOSHA, EOs
Whistleblower Protection
Polling Question
HEALTH SCREENINGS?

YES
Polling Question
Can City employer require employees to wear mask (and/or other PPE)?

YES
What if employee has COVID?

What if employee has underlying health condition?

What if employee is otherwise part of vulnerable population (age, race, etc.)?

What if employee lives with & wants to protect person in vulnerable population?
What are the employee’s concerns?

General concern about getting COVID?

Underlying health issue?

Other risk factor?

Living with/caring for vulnerable person?
ACCOMMODATION

Telework (Working from Home)

Scheduling Changes

Job Restructuring

Light Duty

Leave
Polling Question
Telework

• EO 20-74 – Continue to work from home if possible
• What may be reasonable to do temporarily may not be permanently
• Is physical presence an essential function of the job? Can the job be done at home?
• Can the employee work at home on a part-time or rotating basis? Can you temporarily reassign tasks?
• Analyze: Is this workable? Are there benefits for the city?
• What about other employees?
Questions?
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You can find a recording of this webinar here: [www.lmc.org/returningworkers](http://www.lmc.org/returningworkers)