



Step Up to the H1N1 Pandemic: SHRM's Checklist for HR Professionals

The H1N1 pandemic is presenting extreme challenges to business, government and nonprofit organizations of all types.

Whenever an organization experiences a crisis, its HR leaders find themselves in the eye of the storm, called on to practice “extreme HR.” Really, this just means doing what HR professionals do year in and year out—but in extraordinary circumstances—drawing on their business savvy, professional knowledge and experience ... PLUS.

The “plus” involves combining deep knowledge of their organization’s strategy and business operations with up-to-the minute awareness of best practices in all of the HR disciplines, and then proactively exercising professional judgment and adapting to the conditions thrust on the enterprise.

The Society for Human Resource Management (www.shrm.org) offers HR professionals and their organizations the following checklist to guide them through keeping their workforce as safe and healthy as possible and keeping their businesses running until the emergency has run its course.

**For continuously updated information,
please visit SHRM's H1N1 (Swine) Flu News & Resources
www.shrm.org/SwineFluNews
(some materials may be member-protected)**

PLAN AND LEAD GLOBALLY

- Develop, review and adapt the organization's business continuity and disaster management plans in light of:
 - All laws applicable wherever the employer does business.
 - Relevant health department pandemic influenza plans.
 - The nature of the employer's business, especially if it involves health care or essential services.
- Communicate before, during and after the outbreak as appropriate to the business and the nature of the disruption.
- Take all reasonable measures to prevent spread of the H1N1 virus and protect employees' health and well-being.
- Make any reasonable modifications to the organization's pay, leave and flexible work arrangements to support ill or at-risk employees, or employees caring for ill family members, in staying away from the workplace.
- If all or a portion of the workforce is represented by a labor organization, engage the appropriate union representative in all reasonable circumstances in dealing with this crisis.
- Continuously monitor developments and adapt leadership behavior to changing circumstances.
- Educate and empower management about the epidemic, preventing the spread of the virus and applying the relevant employer policies as usual or as modified.
- Prepare for the possibility of a temporary business closure.
- Review all insurance coverages and manage organizational risk as appropriate to the circumstances.
- In light of the circumstances, err on the side of health and safety and manage legal risks reasonably.

ENSURE HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Institute health practices to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus as appropriate to the circumstances and the nature of the business.
- The following practices are appropriate in all circumstances:
 - Lining up vendors for supplies (soap, hand sanitizer, tissues, counter wipes, phones, gloves, etc.)

- Providing tissues, hand sanitizers and other supplies appropriate to your work environment.
 - Telling employees who are ill to stay at home.
 - Working with vendors (for example, temporary staffing agencies, janitorial services) to encourage them to follow rigorous health and safety practices.
 - Providing employees with guidelines for caregivers.
- The following practices may be appropriate in certain circumstances or for certain employees:
- Stockpiling antivirals.
 - Providing H1N1 vaccinations when available.
 - Requiring certain employees to be vaccinated (e.g., health care and essential services).
 - Offering incentives to employees who are vaccinated.
 - Providing masks.
 - Providing respirators that comply with OSHA regulations.
 - Requiring employees returning from travel to high-risk areas to be tested or to stay away from the workplace for the incubation period.
 - Requiring employees with symptoms to be tested.
 - Establishing social distancing practices, including limiting face-to-face meetings.
 - Establishing policies and practices with respect to voluntary and involuntary quarantine, especially with regard to employees with known serious health conditions.

COMMUNICATE AND EDUCATE

- Apply best practices in organizational communications to:
- Protect employee health and safety.
 - Protect employee privacy.
 - Avoid and mitigate any panic reaction in the workforce.
 - Direct employees to information and resources.
- Use all appropriate internal and external media to communicate with all constituencies (managers, employers, customers, vendors), educating them on what the organization is doing—and what they will be expected to do—to:
- Prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus.
 - Keep operations running.
 - Deliver updates on organizational and community-wide conditions.
 - Comply with all applicable law and collective bargaining agreements, modified as may be necessary and appropriate in the circumstances.

MANAGE PAY AND BENEFITS

- To encourage ill employees to stay home, review and make reasonable modifications to paid leave policies and practices with respect to:
 - Time off when an employee volunteers to get vaccinated.
 - Employee illness.
 - Family member illness.
 - Child care in the event of school/daycare closings.

- To avoid overwhelming health care providers with persons who are ill but may not need care, review and make reasonable modifications to policies that require a doctor's note to take leave or return from leave.

- Review the requirements of all applicable family and medical leave laws, as well as the organization's leave policies and practices, and ensure that laws and policies are applied properly to cases of H1N1 and/or employees whose other serious health conditions may put them at heightened risk.

- Review the organization's attendance policies and practices and modify them as may be appropriate to avoid penalizing employees for H1N1-related absences in circumstances when neither paid leave nor legally mandated unpaid leave is available.

- Review the requirements of all applicable wage and hour laws, as well as the organization's policies and practices, and ensure that they are applied properly to exempt and nonexempt employees who are absent from work in connection with H1N1.

- Review the organization's payroll policies, practices and systems to ensure the employer's ability to deliver employees' pay if payroll systems and vendors are compromised due to consequences of the H1N1 pandemic.

- Review the compensation and benefits provisions of any applicable collective bargaining agreements to ensure their proper application in these circumstances. If exigent circumstances require suspension or modification of certain requirements, notify the appropriate union representative to attempt a mutually agreeable solution.

MANAGE EMPLOYEE AND LABOR RELATIONS

- Regardless of how the workplace may be affected by the H1N1 pandemic, administer all of the employer's policies and practices ethically, equitably, consistently and in compliance with all applicable laws and collective bargaining agreements.

- Be prepared to make and document exceptions to policies and practices where conditions associated with H1N1 create a legitimate business reason to deviate from the norm. If exigent circumstances warrant deviating from provisions of a collective bargaining agreement, notify the appropriate union representative and seek a mutually agreeable solution.
- Ensure that all H1N1 communications are linguistically and culturally appropriate to the employers' workforce.
- Avoid stigmatizing anyone—employee, customer, vendor—in connection with H1N1 (for example, certain ethnicities, those who live or work in high-risk locations or work in high-risk job positions).
- Ensure that line managers are trained in how to deal with employees who are symptomatic or diagnosed with H1N1 and hold them accountable for their actions in that regard.
- Promote a high-performance, collaborative culture.
- In light of applicable laws and applicable collective bargaining agreements, ensure that line managers are trained in how to deal with employees who may refuse to come to work or to perform certain assignments on the ground that the risk of contracting the H1N1 virus is an unreasonably dangerous condition.

STAFF AND TRAIN

- Take all reasonable staffing-related steps to reduce H1N1 exposure:
 - Deploy the organization's social-distancing practices in all appropriate circumstances.
 - Review, modify and implement the organization's telecommuting practices in all reasonable ways to ensure adequate staffing.
 - In light of circumstances, implement staggered shifts to decrease employees' potential exposure to the virus.
 - Consider relocating work to sites that may have lower risk of exposure.
 - Consider recalling expatriates in high-risk areas.
- Review and adapt business continuity and disaster management plans and take all reasonable steps to ensure continued operations with reduced capacity.
 - Review succession plans, skills inventories, training records and other sources to identify employees who have experience or have been cross-trained in essential functions, and prepare them for possible reassignment.
 - In certain circumstances, consider cross-training and segregating a core team that will be capable of maintaining a certain level of operations if the workforce is severely compromised.
 - Cross-train employees to assume emergency preparedness functions in the event of absences in those positions.

- Circumstances permitting, cross-train additional employees to assume other essential functions.
- Ensure that any employees being reassigned to dangerous occupations or those requiring licensure or certification have current credentials and are given opportunities to refresh and practice their skills before deployment.
- Review and ensure compliance with any laws or regulations that establish a minimum age requirement for performing certain work.
- Review all options for contingent staffing of essential operations, including consultants, temporary staff, retirees and other alumni.

DEPLOY TECHNOLOGY

- Deploy all available human resources and business technologies to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus, protect employees' health and well-being and maintain continuity of operations, including:
 - Human resource information systems (HRIS).
 - Video and teleconferencing as alternatives to business travel (including handhelds for low-grade conferencing).
 - Web sites, e-mail, social networking sites and 800 numbers to facilitate communications.
 - Technology infrastructure to support increased telework.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 250,000 members in over 140 countries, the Society serves the needs of HR professionals and advances the interests of the HR profession. Founded in 1948, SHRM has more than 575 affiliated chapters within the United States and subsidiary offices in China and India. Visit SHRM Online at www.shrm.org.

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