

Health Law Bulletin

provided by:



MITCHELL • BLACKSTOCK

Mitchell • Blackstock • Barnes • Wagoner • Ivers • Sneddon • PLLC

CDC Issues New Guidelines For Employers To Respond To Flu Season

In a previous bulletin, we shared the Center for Disease Control's guidelines for health care providers in the event of the H1N1 flu pandemic affecting your community. The CDC recently came out with new guidelines for employers in general. One set of guidelines is recommended if the influenza situation remains the same as it has been so far this year. Additional guidelines are provided if the flu season becomes more severe than has been the case so far this year.

The recommended steps under the current conditions are:

- **Sick persons should stay home.** Ensure that your absence and leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance, and be sure your employees are aware of that guidance.
- **Sick employees at work should be asked to go home.** An employee who exhibits signs of the flu should be separated from other employees and asked to go home and stay home until 24 hours after their fever has gone.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes.**
- **Improve hand hygiene.** If feasible, place hand sanitizers throughout the workplace.
- **Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact.**
- **Encourage employees to get vaccinated.** Encourage your employees to get vaccinated for seasonal influenza as well as for H1N1 influenza when that vaccine becomes available to them.
- **Take measures to protect employees who are at higher risk for complications of influenza.** This group includes pregnant women; children under five years of age; adults and children with chronic lung diseases, heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic medical conditions; and those who are 65 years old or older.
- **Prepare for increased absenteeism and plan ways for essential business functions to continue.**
- **Advise employees who are traveling of precautions to take.** These precautions include advising employees to check for influenza symptoms before leaving for a trip and telling them who to contact if they become ill while on travel status.
- **Prepare for the possibility of school dismissals or closure of child care facilities.** Some of your employees who are not sick may have to stay home to care for children if the flu affects the schools or child care facilities. Encourage your employees not to bring their children to work with them.

If the conditions become more severe than current conditions, the CDC recommends the following steps:

- **Consider active screening of employees who come to work.**

- **Consider alternative work environments for employees at higher risk for complications from influenza.**
- **Consider increasing physical proximity between employees in the workplace.**
- **Consider cancelling non-essential business travel.**

We realize that many of these recommendations are common sense. We also realize that as health care providers, you will have some unique considerations that other employers will not have. However, taking these steps will hopefully allow you to continue to provide your services during the flu season.