

# 8 COVID-19 Related Employee Issues You Should be Documenting Now

During this time of uncertainty, it is critical to ensure your employees are treated fairly and feel safe. It's also essential to document and track employee issues that arise in order to keep track of what's happening today and to analyze patterns later. Here are the top 8 employee issues you should be documenting.

## EMPLOYEE ISSUES RELATED TO CORONAVIRUS:

### 1. Employee Confirmed Positive or Exposure

**Why this matters:** If an employee contracts COVID-19, the CDC recommends they stay home for at least 14 days. A similar response may be required if an employee has potentially been exposed to someone with the virus. You will need to respond quickly with how this will impact leave, pay and coverage. While your first priority is keeping employees safe, you also want to make sure your HR team is up to date with the latest regulations and has consistent processes in place to appropriately communicate to other employees and document your organization's response.



#### Tips:

- Make sure employees know who to contact if they develop symptoms.
- While changes may be necessary as the pandemic continues, make sure you have point-in-time consistency to your processes on how you are approving and compensating for time off.
- Document what special pay arrangement will be provided to the employee, how long it will last and options for use of PTO when exhausted.
- Track the start and end time of their quarantine and leave time.
- Put a process in place for requesting appropriate documentations related to their health check and approval to return to work ([check EEOC guidelines](#) for more information on return to work documentation)
- Follow [EEOC guidelines](#) when communicating to other employees about an infected employee to ensure information related to personal health is confidentially maintained and employee privacy rights are not violated.
- Track employee exposure to the virus and take the necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of other employees with whom they may have had contact.

### 2. Wage & Hour

**Why this matters:** Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, wage and hour regulations were confusing. They have now become even more complex as we figure out how to navigate this new territory. Are your employees who are not working entitled to their wages other than available PTO? If salaried employees are able to work but you don't want them to, are you still required to pay them? What about reducing hours or furloughing? Many employers are also providing emergency pay in certain situations. While it is important that you consult with your legal team on the specifics of your situation, one thing is known—details of these pay changes, special payments or other benefits provided must be documented. In addition to a record of what was or was not promised or provided, this information may also be required to apply for any tax credits or other government-sponsored relief programs. Good documentation will also ensure consistency and fairness throughout your organization.



#### Tips:

- Ensure your employees understand the payment policies and guidelines in place at the time of your pay determinations.
- Document employee hours and work to ensure consistent pay.
- Document specifics and rationale for emergency pay or other benefits provided.
- Consult with your legal counsel to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.

### 3. Travel to High Risk Area

**Why this matters:** Most companies have implemented travel restrictions for their organizations. While a company-wide travel restriction is a good idea, it doesn't prevent employee individual travel. Employers can request that employees inform them if they are planning or have traveled to countries that are considered to be high-risk. If an employee has done so, it is important to document this information.



**Tips:**

- Track where your employees have traveled within the past few months.
- Have a policy in place for communicating travel plans and if they need approval to return to work.
- At the time of writing this document, certain states are considering requiring quarantine for those who have traveled from different states in the US. You may want to modify your policies to mirror these changes.

### 4. Accommodations

**Why this matters:** Accommodations are taking on a new meaning. Employees with underlying medical conditions or those who must care for or are quarantined due to family member illness may be requesting accommodations to their work schedules. This requires new flexibility when it comes to things like working from home or taking leave.



**Tips:**

- Evaluate your accommodations policy. Does it meet the needs of our new workplace realities?
- Document what special pay arrangement may be provided to the employee, how long it will last and options for use of PTO when exhausted.
- Track the start and end time of their quarantine and work leave.
- Update your letter templates and recommended actions to ensure consistency of communications across the organization.
- Recognize that this pandemic is stressful to your team. Consider providing outside resources such as Employee Assistance Program and Tele-Mental Health providers to help employees cope during this time.

### 5. Performance

**Why this matters:** While this is not the time to be doubling down on performance, you still need to recognize that there is a possibility for abuse by employees working from home or those who remain on the job. Employers should lay out their expectations to their workers and document any performance issues.

(For Example: [Facebook recently announced it would Eliminate Performance Reviews during COVID 19](#))



**Tips:**

- Establish daily check-ins with employees.
- Provide different communication options for employees to utilize.
- Set expectations for your employees as to what is "normal" for working under stressful conditions.
- Be sensitive to the fact that work may not be the priority for your team members, particularly those doubling as caregiver, teacher and daycare provider.

## 6. Policy Question

**Why this matters:** The COVID-19 situation is rapidly changing, impacting your employees and their livelihoods. Be the source of truth for them through frequent outbound communications and by having a central resource to track questions asked (and how you answer them...because the answers may change over time). This will give you an immediate pulse on what is of most concern and importance to them in this time of uncertainty.



### Tips:

- Stay current with health policies at the [CDC](#) and [World Health Organization](#).
- Communicate often and through different channels to ensure employees have access.
- Store your organizational policies in a central location so you can ensure consistency across the organization.
- Ensure you are tracking employee policy questions and answers. Look for trends on similar questions so that you can communicate responses broadly to team members.

## 7. Policy and Behavioral Violation

**Why this matters:** We are seeing the best of so many employees and leaders in this time of crisis. But unfortunately, there will be those who look to take advantage of the situation, whether it is not properly utilizing PPE, stealing supplies or mistreating co-workers. As always, it is important to track employee violations and any actions taken.



### Tips:

- Document any policies related to COVID-19 using the new issue categories.
- Ensure each case is handled consistently and fairly.
- Update your templates and recommended actions to make it easier for tracking and documentation.

## 8. Time and Attendance

**Why this matters:** With much of the workforce now working remotely, it is not as easy to track time—particularly for non-exempt employees. Regulations are still in place and overtime pay is mandated when worked. This also holds true for essential employees who may need to work extra hours to fill in for co-workers who are quarantined.



### Tips:

- Put in place easy ways to track time worked and approve overtime for non-exempt employees.
- Track employee time and attendance if they need to take time off related to illness, care taking or personal reasons.

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## Take Inventory! How do you modify & improve your employee relations practices? Here are some helpful questions to start the discussion with your team:

- How are you managing new employee issues related to COVID-19?
- How has the situation changed how you are tracking employee issues?
- How well are your current processes & actions working?
- What do you need to be doing differently?
- What policies and letter templates need to be updated?
- How are you going to communicate and train the employee relations team on new processes?

## NEED HELP?

HR Acuity is offering free access to our employee relations and investigations platform.

[Learn more.](#) Stay current at the [HR Acuity COVID-19 Resources page](#).

We are here to help! Schedule a [strategy session with our experts](#).