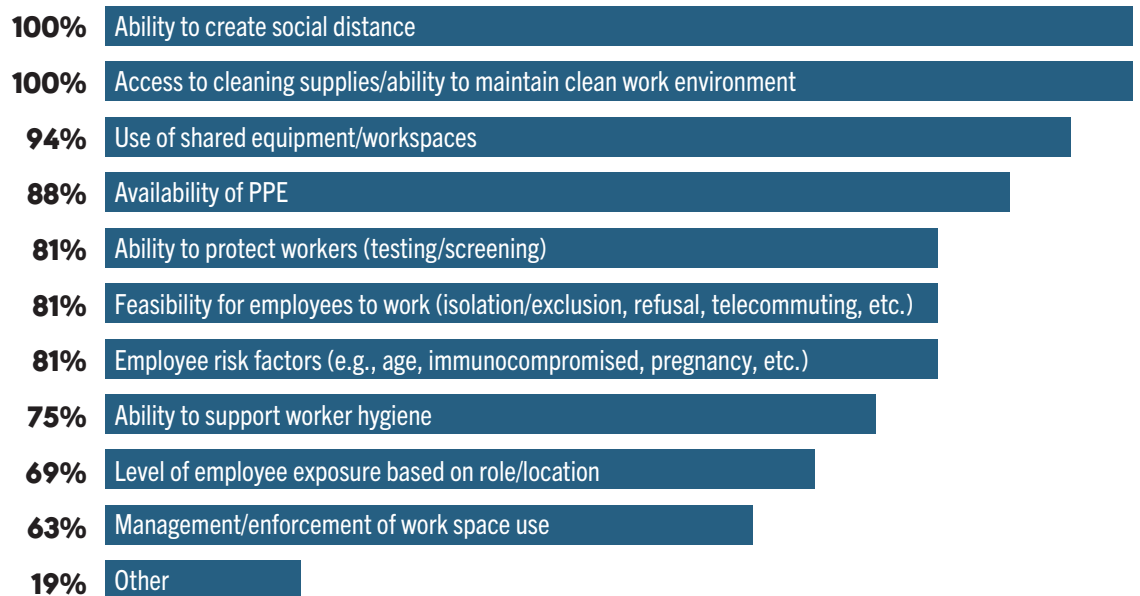# COVID-19 BEST PRACTICES:
Return to Office Plans

As some states are beginning to ease restrictions, many organizations are working on their return to work strategies—and there's a lot to consider! Here's how our community of ER experts is thinking about how to approach the situation.

What criteria are you using to assess the COVID-19 threat status before deciding to reopen?

%	Criteria
100%	Ability to create social distance
100%	Access to cleaning supplies/ability to maintain clean work environment
94%	Use of shared equipment/workspaces
88%	Availability of PPE
81%	Ability to protect workers (testing/screening)
81%	Feasibility for employees to work (isolation/exclusion, refusal, telecommuting, etc.)
81%	Employee risk factors (e.g., age, immunocompromised, pregnancy, etc.)
75%	Ability to support worker hygiene
69%	Level of employee exposure based on role/location
63%	Management/enforcement of work space use
19%	Other

Other Criteria:

"We're looking at:

- *Governmental advisories and orders, as well as city and state orders (e.g., essential workers only, etc.)*
- *Local health authority guidance*
- *Local infection rates*
- *Testing status, availability and hospitals' ability to respond*
- *Availability of effective antibody tests*
- *Local contact tracing practices and effectiveness*
- *Availability of public transportation*
- *Landlord guidance/policies*
- *Local closures (schools, etc.)*
- *Local/client/peer/industry practices*
- *Capability for temperature tests and screenings—but not a must have to reopen"*

Extending WFH/Transitioning away from office environment.

"We are operating well with employees at home so our guiding principles around each role's/ job's return to office is that there has to be a compelling advantage/benefit that offsets the incremental risk of having people leave their homes. Our motto is 'we're in no hurry to return'."

"We are also considering whether there are some departments that will be able to permanently work remotely. We have a finite amount of space at our corporate locations so not everyone will be able to return to the office."

What approach is your organization planning to follow as it reopens?

100% Creating our own holistic plan aligned with local regulations

63% Following state by state guidelines

50% Following country by country guidelines

31% Following industry-specific guidelines

ADDITIONAL IDEAS:

Conducting Wellness Assessments.

"Temp screening in some locations. In others, we're asking employees to complete a wellness questionnaire before coming to work and verbally confirm:

- *Are you feeling unwell?*
- *Are you exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19?*
- *Have you travelled out of the state?*
- *Have you been in contact with someone recently who tested positive to COVID19?*

'Yes' answers to any of the questions may be escalated for additional review by Employee Relations."

"Considering 'self-attestation' app to be put in place. In some of our global locations, there are government run applications that we need to utilize (i.e. China). For those locations without government applications, we are looking to set up our company made app."

"As antibody testing is currently less reliable, we will continue to use available PCR testing. Once reliable antibody testing is available, we may use it instead of PCR testing."

"Along with temp screening, all onsite workers are asked to self-disclose symptoms when entering the site."

"Temperature screening only where required by state - i.e. in VT."

Limiting office access.

"Ideally, we want a significant percentage of employees able to return to offices and not a phased approach, are looking at site/location of offices and some reopen before others depending on local COVID numbers."

"Alternating 2-week cohorts in the office, with a continued focus on telework."

"Employees who are required to return to the office will also likely be required to wear a fact mask/covering and if they are unable to for medical/religious reasons, they will need to follow the workplace accommodation process. If they don't have a need for a workplace accommodation, discuss alternatives (including remote work, etc.)."

"Limited to no use of general areas such as conference rooms or break rooms, regular cleaning required if rooms are in use."

How are you handling employee temperature screening (and minimizing risk of screeners) if states require it before returning to work (especially with many locations and if unable to hire health care professional to administer)?

Avoiding—unless required.

"We are not, unless required to do so. Symptoms are lagging indicators for this disease that primarily spreads in the pre-symptom period and so these checks, while reducing risk, are not as valuable as is thought. The person with the fever today, spread the bug in the prior days. While certainly a containment move it is a late one. We are asking employees to self-check before leaving home and telling them to not come to the office if they are symptomatic."

"We will explore the possibility of temperature screening in areas where having some employees return to the office makes sense."

Looking to respect employee privacy.

"TBD-trying to figure out how to do this and ensure our privacy rights are being adhered to by ensuring all aspects of return to work are run through 'privacy impact assessment process'."

Implementing new procedures.

"Looking into obtaining free standing devices that measure temperature as employees pass by it to minimize added risk."

"We've assigned a greeter to do this in each location where we have implemented it."

"We have an infrared (no contact) screener at the entrance, and for readings above a certain level, a second screening with a disposable thermometer is conducted."

"We are relying on landlords to bring in vendors to manage screening in most locations."

"All employees screened upon entrance to building."

"We are currently running a small voluntary pilot using forehead thermometer strips that employees can pick up at the door, on the way into a building. It will be evaluated for use on a larger scale."

"In our large distribution centers, we are using technology that screens all associates as they walk into the facility. If their temperature registers 100.4 or higher, we screen them a second time using a temporal thermometer. All screeners are provided nitrile gloves, eye protection or face shield, mask, and hand sanitizer and disinfectant are available. In our smaller distribution centers and stores, we are using the temporal thermometers only. Note: We have deployed the temperature screening across the supply chain network and in select stores (irrespective of a state/local order)."

"We have implemented a temperature monitoring policy and wellness check protocol. Some facilities have the onsite clinic assisting with the checks, otherwise they are self-administered by the employees."

Considering self-screening/reporting.

"We may explore options for self-screening prior to reporting to work locations."

Are you planning to require documentation/proof of health clearance from employees who have had a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 before they return to the workplace?

31% No
38% Yes
31% Undecided
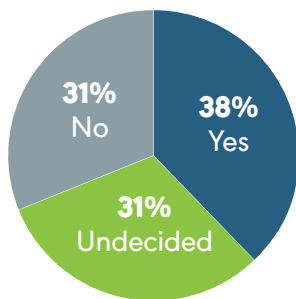
It's complicated.

"Our current policies to not require Dr. notes or fitness for duty certifications. We may have to change policy if were to require; also considering CDC guidance to not overwhelm healthcare providers in getting notes and challenges employees may have in getting documentation."

"We don't want to add another task to the medical pros at this time, but will revisit as we are doing with nearly everything."

"We're working out the details."

Yes, definitely.

"We would ask for medical documentation that the employee is back to full health."

"Must be cleared by Healthcare Provider and Health Management Services."

"We require employees to stay out for 14 days from the date of their test or, if not tested, from the date of first symptom AND to be symptom free for 72 hours without medications before they can return."

"We have been doing this since mid-March. Requires release from a healthcare provider."

"We are fortunate to be able to utilize our 3rd party leave administrator to assist with this process. As you know, some jurisdictions are not allowing employers to obtain medical certification for confirmed/presumed positive cases, including certifying they are able to return to work. We continue to hone this process based upon ongoing pressures on health care providers and state/local laws."

"We have this process in place for our field associates and would mirror it for our office-based associates."

"We are asking that they provide proof of their ability to return to work from a physician before allowing them back into the workplace. This has been in place in our manufacturing facilities that have been operating since the beginning of the pandemic."

> **What procedures have you established for notifications, contact tracing, and office closures and do they differ for COVID-19 positive situations vs. suspect cases?**

Consistent process regardless of status.

"Employees must notify us if they have been diagnosed or exposed."

"We aren't differentiating between confirmed and suspected cases, as confirmation is do difficult to achieve in a timely manner. We have developed a Quarantine process including manager scripting, contact tracing, notification and check-in processes, and return to work criteria."

"We will ask anyone who is ill or has an ill family member to stay home (even absent diagnosis). For diagnosed cases, we will contact trace."

"All employees and managers know to notify Employee Relations who is managing the triage process which includes determining who needs to be quarantined, office or branch closings, etc. We follow the same process for a tested positive vs. a presumed positive case. We often follow the same process even before an employee goes to the doctor if they have certain symptoms. Our process includes contact tracing for who the symptomatic employee came in contact with while at work - whether that be other employees, customers, contractors or vendors. we've automated the process so that we can notify the various groups that would need to notify different people (ER only handles employees), schedule cleanings, notify DOH, etc."

"We would approach a positive/suspected case by temporarily closing the affected office for sanitization and disinfecting while notifying any affected employees of the possible exposure."

"Our Security and Safety organization has a robust process for employees to notify us of suspected or positive cases/exposure. S&S does the company contact tracing and notifications via email and phone. Depending on the situation, a building or part of a building may be temporarily closed for disinfecting."

"We have special teams dedicated to handling the company's response to both suspected and confirmed CV19 positive cases. Once the local facility manager is notified of a suspected/confirmed positive employee, we have a brief conversation with the positive employee to obtain their help in identifying where they were in the building during their last scheduled shift and individuals they had contact with. Next step includes reviewing surveillance video to confirm and/or identify additional individuals that had close contact with the positive employee. After all identifications have been made, facility leaders have private conversations with those impacted (we provide scripts to the leaders) and help them understand next steps, which typically includes being on emergency paid leave for at least 14 days. In a few instances, we've had to close a facility for a shift or two in order to complete the most intense form of deep cleaning. We've explained to those associates the need to close (conducting a deep sanitization of the building) and pay them for their shift. We are very careful not to disclose the name of the associate(s) that tested positive as well as those who had close contact; however, word travels quickly."

"We currently have a protocol in place for our Field Associates related to notifications for positive situations and suspect cases. The protocol has some contact tracing within it. We have not yet created a more robust contact tracing process."

"We have processed for all and treat confirmed and presumptive cases in the same manner."

Tracing is a must for proof positive.

"We have a communicable disease policy that has been updated to account for COVID-19 and has roles and responsibilities for employee, leaders, HR and Facilities. Operations team sends out email announcements to closed office locations. HR/ER has a communication strategy and different templates for employee/vendor /contractor notifications for any COVID positive cases–we only provide communication notifications for positive cases."

"We have pandemic resource teams in each business unit that has a written protocol for when confirmed cases–who to contact, questions to ask to determine contact(s), office closure and cleaning, etc. This will not differ with the re-open plans."

"Generally similar to positive case process that we had before we transitioned everyone home."

"We don't communicate suspect cases only positive cases. We conduct anonymous contact tracing and notify those who are at high risk for contracting based on their relationship to the positive case. We then send all home for a 14-day quarantine period with pay."

"All our global offices have been closed for the past weeks. China is the only location that has opened up a few weeks back. Before offices officially closed, request had been set for employees to self-disclose if suspect or positive COVID-19 to our security team so company can track the number of cases and trace back to exposure."

Creative solutions.

"Details to be determined, but we have recently released an App version of our Employee Hub. I imagine this will have some utilization for COVID notifications."

"Portal Communications, Corporate Communications, Management notification."