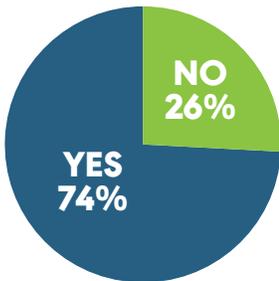


COVID-19 BEST PRACTICES: Emergency Pay and Contingent Worker Benefits

This week's survey to our Employee Relations Community experts focused on how organizations are handling emergency pay and addressing contingent worker benefits. Read on to find out what we learned.

Are you offering extended (more than 2 weeks/80 hours) emergency pay to employees who can't work for COVID-19 related reasons (e.g., required quarantine for caretaker/childcare complications, technology limitations, etc.)?



Implementing New Practices.

"We have provided our employees a newly created charge code for all hours missed due to COVID-19 related matters (e.g. illness, caring for dependents, etc.) The code may be used indefinitely as we are not certain when it will be ended. It prevents employees from having to use their PTO for COVID matters."

"We set up a COVID19 (interim) accommodation called 'Emergency Family Accommodation' which employees can apply for should they are unable to work their normal objectives. This would be triggered after the employee and manager have already exhausted the idea of flex working, etc. for a period of up to 30 days."

"Right now, we provide 14 days quarantine leave if they are quarantined due to exposure. If they get sick and are suspected of having COVID-19 they are eligible for 14 days of special recovery leave. We are providing 5 days of Emergency time off for childcare and similar situations."

"Ten days of pay—we call it PTO forgiveness—if employee or immediate family have the virus. Not for childcare, but we're offering flexibility: if they can work some, they are being paid full 40 hours, if no effort they have to use PTO."

Enhancing Benefits.

"We are allowing use of Emergency PTO including going into negative balance for an additional 14 days."

"Our disaster pay is not capped and is granted for company or government directed quarantine/isolation. Pay will be issued for the length of the mandate."

"We are limiting formal emergency pay to two weeks, but have enhanced childcare and PTO benefits available, as well as other creative options."

"Over 2/3 of our employees are teleworking 100%. They can work while in self-quarantine, taking care of children, etc."

- *We have implemented a reimbursement program of up to \$200 per employee if they need to purchase items to telework - upgraded Wi-Fi at home, better cell phone plan, computer monitor etc. We already provide laptops.*
- *Our sick time usage has actually gone down in the last two weeks. We have a generous paid leave policy and already offer various alternatives so our employees can be paid through this pandemic."*

"A \$1200 tax-free emergency payment is being paid to all employees making under \$100,000 per year in April."

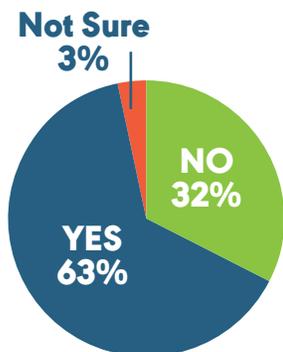
"Keep employees who are high risk and can't work from home, or have other challenges like childcare or have jobs that can't be done at home, and are unable to find creative solutions, to redeploy/find alternative work arrangements."

"We are providing an additional 4 weeks of emergency paid leave to those that are 65+ years of age, pregnancy and/or have an underlying health condition."

"We did the 14 days of paid admin leave at first. Now we're considering keeping all employees' pay whole through 4/15. We also paid all employees making a base of \$100k or less a bonus of \$1,200."

"We are giving more sick days than usual in line with government recommendations. We don't want to incentivize coming to work sick."

How are you responding to contingent workers not eligible for special pay benefits available to employees? Are you doing anything differently to support your vendors' contingent workers?



Requesting Vendors follow suit.

"We have asked vendors to also issue disaster pay applying our same rules."

"We are sharing with the vendors the benefits & practices our company has in place so they can assess what if any similar benefits they want to put in place."

"We are encouraging contingent worker agencies to mirror our (generous) benefits and agreeing to pay the extra billing."

"We're starting to see this and are explaining to each inquiry that they are not an employee and redirecting them to their agency. We're considering leaning into the agencies to ensure they're staying in close communication with their people and reminding them of any benefits/arrangements they have in place for them."

"Working with our Supply Management organization to share what we are doing for our employees and encourage them to consider similar offerings."

Encouraging Communications.

"We're directing them to their vendor, but including them in our COVID-10 communications."

Providing Additional Benefits.

"We are working with our cafeteria vendor to provide more funding to them."

"Many of our clients who are direct billed for contingent workers are paying up to one month of their wages while not working."

"We have some temps, important to our daily business coverage, for whom we have made the decision to have them work from home with our company providing equipment."

Considering Options.

"As of now, we have not, but we are discussing various options."

How are you handling essential employees who refuse to come the workplace in spite of assuring that safety precautions are in place (enhanced cleaning, etc.)?

Acting with Empathy.

"We are not making anyone come into the workplace that doesn't feel safe."

"Education and empathy first. Reminding if eligible for medical or statutory leave it should be pursued. Ultimately continued refusal may be result in corrective action, up to and including separation (resignation or involuntary termination). Thankfully we have not gotten there yet, but we anticipate that day will come."

"Trying very hard to find these individuals alternative duties or work from home, etc. but if all else fails pay through April 30th in most cases."

"We've not had too many instances where employees are refusing to come to work. For positions that involve delivery to customers' homes, we've offered sales floor positions and outsourced delivery to 3rd party labor."

"We are allowing use of PTO including going into a limited negative balance. For those with underlying health conditions/risks and a physician note, we follow our ADA process."

"They will not be forced to come onsite - they can use emergency pay, PTO, unpaid leave or take a LOA if it's based on an underlying health condition. Even our essential workers have a choice to telework if assignments are available. Managers will help them find work they can perform at home. Note: Our workers do not have any contact with the general public."

"For now, we're reinforcing the need for the employee to be at work, reinforcing safety precautions, making sure there's no medical disability to consider...if they still refuse, they can use natural disaster days, vacation days and then they'll be unpaid. We're not at a place where we would consider disciplinary action or termination."

Offering PTO Options.

"Lots of communications, more visible cleaning - if that still doesn't work we have 5 days of Emergency time off people can use. Then it's paid time off or an unpaid personal leave for up to 30 days. We haven't finalized further than that."

"They may use up their PTO which has been front-loaded so they do not need to wait to accrue it and up to 2 weeks of unpaid time in addition."

"PTO for employees that have no heightened risk situations, but we have increased the hourly wage for those that we have deemed on-site-critical."

"We have offered 5 days of Emergency time off. After than they can use PTO or request up to 30 days of unpaid time off."

"This has not been an issue yet, but we are looking into personal leaves as a possibility."

"PTO for employees that have no heightened risk situations, but we have increased the hourly wage for those that we have deemed on-site-critical."

Following Legal Guidelines.

"We haven't encountered this yet but have worked with our legal team and agreed that our Employee Relations Consultant would have managers seek additional details regarding the resistance. If all supports have been offered and employee still refuses, it would be handled per normal job abandonment process and we would separate with the employee."

Looking for more best practices and guidance around managing employee issues related to COVID-19?

Visit the [HR Acuity COVID-19 resource center.](#)