

The anticipation of reboarding after COVID-19 is creating worry and stress for many employees. As they return to work, managers will be key to their organization's success in resumption of normal, or "new normal" operations. While the task may feel overwhelming for some, in many ways the process will be similar to standard manager duties.

### What to expect

- It's your responsibility as a manager to explain your organization's recovery plan and implement that plan within your team.
- What's different in this situation is the level of intensity that will be required of you.
- Stress experienced during and after a disruptive event often increases people's need for repetition of information, reassurance, and calm. Your team will look to you for support and clear information.

### Prioritize Safety

- Implement the health and safety practices your organization has created.
- Be sure your employees are aware of and complying with new organizational guidelines and any social distancing rules while in the workplace.
- Allow some flexibility as your employees become accustomed to these new working conditions.

### Assess business continuity practices

- Reassess projects and goals and see how you can adapt them while working within new organizational guidelines.
- Will shifts need to be staggered? Will the office operate at half capacity, with the other half telecommuting? Be clear about options for employees.

### Craft Your Communication

- Honest and transparent communication is critical. If the new working conditions will impact how you conduct business, this is the time to communicate that.
- Set clear expectations about changes in how the organization will operate and how long these changes might last. That will help reassure employees and build their confidence in the plan.

### Be patient

- Lead with empathy and demonstrate an understanding that while all employees have experienced this crisis, they haven't all experienced it in the same way.
- Some employees have a hard time adapting to change. They may want continued clarification of guidelines and reassurance.
- Be prepared for push back. Listen to reservations and concerns. Reiterate the organization's position and applicable policies.

### Focus on Social Connection

- Think about facilitating safe, enjoyable social interactions in the workplace. Try to include staff who are working remotely as well.
- Positive social interactions can reduce stress, strengthen the social glue of teams and increase productivity.

## Build resilience and boost morale

- Be aware that feelings of anxiety and depression are normal responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Use this time to build resilience and boost morale among your staff.
- Check in regularly. Ask about issues that may be causing stress. Work together to identify solutions.
- Create a forum with open discussions about resilience and encourage your staff to introduce any ideas they may have.
- Familiarize yourself with employee programs or other benefits available to support you and your employees' emotional wellbeing.

## Monitor impact of new practices

- Monitor how your staff is adjusting to the new work practices. Have your staff provide regular feedback.
- Be aware of the impact the new practices are having on you as well. If you need support or assistance managing in the "new normal," consider calling Concern.

## Celebrate Successes

- Create a culture of gratitude. Showing appreciation for your staff will promote a renewed sense of energy and optimism.
- Celebrations don't have to be large events. Catch people doing something right. Spotlight individual employees or exceptional teams. Acknowledge how they had a positive impact.

Sources: *Workplace Options, Franco, F & Gregg-Meeker, C. 2020 May 11. First Sun EAP*

## Concern Resources for Managers

This transition is new to us all. Don't feel you must go it alone. Concern is here to support you as you manage this next phase.

- **Manager Consultations.** Every day, we assist managers as they respond to employee issues. Contact us for confidential consultations related to return to work concerns.
- **Employee Referrals.** If you have concerns about an employee's wellbeing and/or their response to return to work plans, we encourage you to offer support by making a referral to Concern.
- **Crisis Support for Teams.** If your team has lost members due to COVID-19 or for any other reason, Concern can facilitate support groups to process the team's grief to help them move forward. These can be done virtually, and when allowed, in person.
- **Living With Challenges of COVID-19 Webinars.** Mental Health and COVID-19 - Manage Anxiety, Fear and Stress; Disaster Proof Your Finances; Caring for Your Elder During a Pandemic; Survival Strategies for Remote Workers
- **Coronavirus Resource Page.** [Click here](#) for resources related to COVID-19.
- **Personal Support.** Counseling staff are available 24/7 with expert and confidential support. All support is available virtually (telephone, video, and message/text platform). More confidential resources available on our member website below.

Concern teams with Human Resources to provide another resource for managers and supervisors to consult about how to manage issues with individuals, within and between work groups, and across departments. When you call Concern, ask for a Management Consultant or request to speak to a Clinical Manager.

**Call: 800.344.4222**  
**[employees.concernhealth.com](https://employees.concernhealth.com)**