

RETURNING EMPLOYEES TO WORK SITES

A Guide for Employers

THE PANDEMIC'S EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IMPACT

As your organization begins to transition back to the workplace after the disruption of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, taking care of employees' emotional health and wellbeing will be an important component of that process.

Employees who have been working remotely have had to learn new ways of accomplishing important tasks while also balancing other parts of their life. Identities have been blended - and lines blurred - as employees played the role of teacher for their children and caregiver for their aging or sick loved ones, all while trying to maintain some level of routine in their household.

By contrast, there are employees who have been living in isolation, relying on technology as their only way to connect with family and friends.

Employees on the front lines throughout this pandemic have kept operations flowing and others safe and healthy. These heroes are experiencing physical and mental fatigue in record numbers.

Constant, competing demands, compounded by prolonged uncertainty, has exacerbated stress levels and heightened anxiety and depression even in the healthiest individuals. This is the context in which your employees are returning to the workplace. The emotional health concerns that developed, or that existed but were heightened during this challenging time, will not disappear as a result of being onsite. It's reasonable to expect an adjustment period for your workforce.

Within every employee population, there is likely to be a sense of grief and trauma resulting from the months of uncertainty and turmoil related to the pandemic.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As this pandemic has forever changed many aspects of life, our professional environment may not look exactly as it did before COVID-19. The ability to return to work is an opportunity to restore the structure, connectivity, sense of purpose and financial security that work provides and to instill hope for the future. Our ability to navigate change with patience and understanding — and to continue to cope with new stressors in healthy ways — will make us stronger and more resilient.

You can help boost your employees' emotional wellbeing and support a healthy transition back to the workplace. Use the variety of resources available from your SupportLinc program to place a focus on mental health and share relevant and practical tools for addressing concerns including stress and anxiety, loneliness and isolation, sadness and depression, grief and loss and financial wellbeing.

PROMOTING A SAFE AND HEALTHY RETURN TO WORK

In order to maximize the value of the SupportLinc program, your communication plan should include a variety of tactics to help you raise awareness, invite participation and encourage repeated use of these resources by your leadership and employees. Here are some best practice recommendations.

Raise Leadership Awareness

Schedule a SupportLinc Program Overview with organizational leaders to help raise their awareness for a top-down approach to providing support for your employees.

Discuss at Management Meetings

Encourage managers to become familiar with the SupportLinc web portal, mobile app and other resources and to guide employees to these resources when they recognize an employee is struggling.

Send Interactive eBlasts

Utilize the SupportLinc program "Return to Site" email series to highlight the wide variety of program resources available to help employees manage their emotional wellbeing during this time of transition.

Post on Internal Portals

Prominently display the "Return to Site" flyer on your intranet in addition to other portals like your HR/Benefits site and wellness page.

Add to Meeting Agendas

Promote the SupportLinc program during meetings including change of shift, team huddles, safety meetings and wellness programming.

Share in the Moment

Organizational leaders, managers and front-line supervisors should guide employees to SupportLinc program resources as they may become aware of personal stress, life events or other circumstances where support and assistance may be of benefit.

Use the One in Five Campaign Resources

Talking about mental health can seem daunting, for both leaders and employees. SupportLinc's anti-stigma One in Five Campaign includes the "Start the Conversation" module. With a flash course, dialogue guide and handouts, this helpful resource provides step-by-step guidance to help your workforce reduce hesitation and feel more comfortable discussing emotional wellbeing. Find more information at www.1in5.info.

Contact your CuraLinc representative to develop a tailored approach for supporting your organization as you return to being onsite.