



When the Shelter-In-Place orders rolled out across the Bay Area back in March, we all hoped it was a temporary inconvenience that would be behind us by summer.

While it has been a profoundly difficult year, there is hope that we will find our way back to a semblance of pre-COVID normal, but it is proving to be a slow and non-linear process. The impact of COVID-19 will continue to affect the workplace for the foreseeable future. Employers should be poised to respond to changing business conditions, government mandates and unique employee needs.

There is little doubt that many employers will be faced with COVID-related issues in their own workplace at some point. Whether it's sick employees, fears of exposure, navigating leave laws, or stressed parents managing distance learning at home, employers will be asked to support their employees and adapt to the ever-changing landscape.

To support you to support your employees, we will be offering a monthly Covid-related workshop through at least the end of the year. Topics could include responses to employees who are sick, remote work issues, Covid-related leaves of absence and more. We will choose workshop topics based on your feedback and questions. Each session will have 30 minutes of information sharing and 30 minutes of Q&A.

To give you a sense of what we'll discuss, we're going to share our top three questions and answers this week and another three next week. More details can be found in our COVID-19 Employer Guide.

Since the original release of the Guide in June, numerous updates and additions have been made to keep the information and tools current. A new section entitled, "Practical Application of COVID Guidelines" was created to provide specific action steps for responding to various COVID-related scenarios, including email and letter templates with live links, isolation and quarantine timelines, and employee benefit entitlements.

2020 has been a whirlwind of new laws, financial complexities and never before seen employment issues. Our goal is to lead our clients through the storm so they can focus on their business, retain their talent and position themselves for the next, best PPP: Post-Pandemic Prosperity. :-)

Top 3 COVID-Related Questions This Week

1. My employee's family member has tested positive for COVID-19 but my employee has no symptoms. Can they come to work?

It depends. If the family member is able to isolate in a separate area of the house and there has been and will be no contact, then your employee may report to work. If there has been contact or it is not possible for the family member to isolate in a separate area, then the employee must quarantine for 14 days from the last day of contact. If contact is ongoing, the clock resets each day until the infected person has completed isolation.

2. We have an employee who was tested for COVID-19 nine days ago and just got a positive result today. The employee has been quarantining since the onset of symptoms. Do we need to inform the staff of possible exposure even though no one is showing symptoms?

Yes. Members of the staff who had close contact with the infected person are required to quarantine for 14 days from the day of exposure. Although nine days have already passed, they should be asked to quarantine for the remaining five days and immediately report if they experience any symptoms.

3. I have an employee who doesn't want to wear a mask at work and another employee who says they cannot wear a mask because of a medical condition. How do I handle these employees?

Employees who refuse to wear a mask or comply with any other required safety protocol for reasons not related to a medical condition may be disciplined. This may include warnings, requiring them to stay home or termination. Employees who are unable to wear a mask because of a medical condition may need a reasonable accommodation. This might possibly include alternative PPE, i.e, a face shield, working remotely or other alternative solutions. You should engage in the interactive process to determine what is needed to enable the employee to work while maintaining necessary safety measures.

Workshop Poll: What time would work best for you?



Morning Coffee Break?

Lunch Break?



Afternoon Coffee Break?



Please email joy@nextlevelstrategies and let us know which time would be best for you!

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

Unemployed people in California will soon receive an additional \$300 per week in benefits as part of an agreement between the state and the federal government. Additional funds will be available for a limited period of time, three weeks minimum. To qualify for the extra funds, people must receive at least **\$100** per week in benefits from EDD and certify that they are unemployed or partially unemployed because of the coronavirus pandemic. NOTE: This is a change from the original Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), where if you qualify for \$1, you qualify for the federal funds.

While there isn't a set date for the launch of the new funds, the EDD will give retroactive pay unemployment benefits dating back to August 1.

Anyone whose hours or pay is reduced is eligible to file for unemployment. It currently maxes out at \$450 per week.

If employees are still working part time and making more than \$600 per week, they will not qualify for benefits UNLESS YOU FILE A WORK SHARING APPLICATION with the EDD. Work Sharing application here: [Work Sharing Application](#). It's administratively burdensome but it's good for a year.

Super important! If you are going to reduce pay, either as a standalone or in conjunction with reducing work hours, you must keep your exempt employees above the minimum salary basis or convert them to hourly employees. If you have 25 or fewer employees, that number is \$49,920. If you have 26 or more employees, exempt employees can't be paid less than \$54,080.

NLS is here to support our clients through this uncertain time. We can assist with planning, paperwork, messaging and more. If you need our help, please call us at 415.876-NEXT.

Please join us for an evening of cocktails, dinner, and dancing to celebrate another successful year of the Women's Business Association.

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