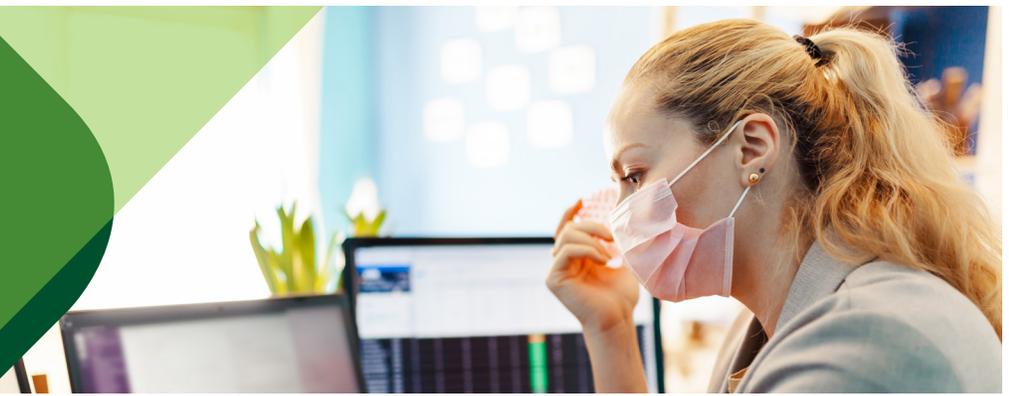


# Return to Work Following the COVID-19 Pandemic



While it's still unclear how long COVID-19 will continue to affect our economy, businesses and organizations are getting ready to re-open as COVID-19 restrictions are eased. Public Health officials caution that a return to normalcy will be gradual. Employers will need to remain vigilant and have a thoughtful, detailed return to work plan ready to help keep employees healthy and safe.

A return to work plan helps reintegrate workers back into the workplace. The benefits of having this type of program include increased employee engagement, proactive cost containment, reduced turnover, increased communication, and improved morale. Your organization's plan may need to be tailored to your employee's specific needs and take into consideration childcare and caregiving obligations, as well as health issues and fears.

## Your COVID-19 return to work plan could include:

- ▶ Anticipated yet flexible return to work dates, as local and provincial orders frequently change
- ▶ Disinfecting and cleaning measures:
  - Clean and disinfect all often-touched surfaces, including workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs
  - Discourage sharing of phones, desks, offices, or other tools and equipment where possible; if necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use
  - Provide disposable wipes so commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by employees before each use
- ▶ Social distancing protocol:
  - Avoid gatherings of 10 or more people
  - Instruct workers to maintain at least two metres of distance from others
  - Host meetings virtually when possible
  - Limit the number of people on the job site to essential personnel only
  - Discourage people from shaking hands
- ▶ Screening procedures:
  - Non-invasive thermal testing before employees enter the office
- ▶ Employee safety training:
  - Tissue and disposal practices, soap and water, hand sanitizer locations, reminders about not touching the facial area
  - Proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
  - Stay at home protocols
- ▶ Mental health considerations
- ▶ Process for individualized requests:
  - Employees will be returning to work faced with different situations; have plans in place regarding schedules to accommodate health concerns, fears, childcare, or other caregiver responsibilities, and be flexible and compassionate

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Your return to work plan should be tailored to your business's unique needs and follow local and provincial regulations. Reach out to Cowan Insurance Group for assistance with creating the right return to work plan for your organization.

### Return to work considerations

Returning to work during COVID-19 is likely to bring challenges. Some of the most common you'll need to be prepared may include:

- ▶ Changing worker priorities, with many employees preferring to work from home permanently
- ▶ Due to social distancing protocols, your organization may need to reconfigure the office's layout; employee workstations should be two metres apart
- ▶ Adapting to changing rules and regulations, including identifying alternative suppliers, prioritizing existing customers, or suspending portions of your operations
- ▶ Being prepared for public response to re-opening by keeping employees and customers safe and healthy

### Continued safety

Re-opening your business post-COVID-19 will not be as simple as opening the doors. You will need to evaluate each step carefully and gradually as you begin to bring employees back to work.

For more information, visit [cowangroup.ca/covid19](https://cowangroup.ca/covid19), or talk to your Cowan representative.

Please note that this article should be used for informational purposes only and should not supersede applicable provincial or local guidance. Additionally, please review any workplace-specific considerations, which could be more involved depending on the industry you operate in, when drafting your return to work plan.