

# The Coronavirus and Workplace Readiness

March 9, 2020

We've had a lot of members and customers reaching out to us lately to ask for advice about dealing with the recent outbreak of COVID-19, more commonly known as the "coronavirus." As with every other challenge that our customers face, we're here to help! While we aren't experts at dealing with viral outbreaks, we've put together a comprehensive library of resources for you from organizations like the CDC and the World Health Organization, and you can find those materials in the right-hand column of this page. We'll continue to keep this site up to date as things continue to develop.

In the meantime, we're also prepared to share with you the steps that we've been taking to keep our people safe and ensure the continuity of our business operations. The article that you're reading is the first of a planned series that we'll be writing in collaboration with leaders throughout our organization. We want to emphasize that these are the steps that we're taking, but they may not necessarily be the best steps for your organization or practice. Members are encouraged to consider reaching out to their local and state health officials for expert advice on how the virus is impacting their area and what they can do to protect themselves.

## What We're Doing

VGM has created a taskforce of individuals from our Human Capital, Security & Compliance, and Project Management teams. This taskforce is responsible for monitoring the situation using resources released by the CDC, WHO, and our state and county health officials. They are also responsible for developing and implementing our communication plan to make sure that VGM's leaders and employees are kept informed. Under their guidance, VGM is currently taking the following steps:

- We're asking all of our employees to follow proper coughing/sneezing etiquette, wash their hands often, and avoid touching their eyes, noses, and mouths with unwashed hands. We've supplied plenty of alcohol-based hand sanitizer in all of our common spaces and break rooms, and we're actively encouraging people to use it. We've also posted signage in all of our restrooms and kitchenettes outlining proper hand-washing techniques.
- We're actively encouraging our sick employees to stay home until they're free of fever and all other symptoms for at least 24 hours without the use of any medication, over-the-counter or otherwise. We're also encouraging our leaders to actively monitor their work areas for employees who don't appear to be feeling well, especially if they're coughing or showing signs of respiratory illness, and send them home immediately.
- We're being especially flexible about our sick leave and work-from-home policies while this situation develops so that sick employees don't feel pressured to return to work early. We're also directing our leaders to be flexible with employees requesting to take time off to care for sick family members, especially if they have young children.
- For those employees who plan to travel **internationally**, we're requesting that they report their travel plans to HR and provide us with a full itinerary that includes all connecting airports and destinations. We're then asking that those whose travel plans include stops in

parts of the world that the CDC has classified with an alert level of 2 or higher stay home for a minimum of fourteen days after they return, and supplying them with any equipment necessary to work from home during that period if they don't already have it.

- For those whose work normally requires them to travel **domestically**, we're giving them the option to conduct their business using video conferencing for the duration of the outbreak. We're also encouraging them to cancel or reschedule their business trips if they're at all uncomfortable about the risk of travelling to certain parts of the country. Just like international travel, if any of our employees travel to a part of the country that the CDC classifies with an alert level of 2 or higher, we're asking them to self-quarantine by working from home for two weeks after their return.

### **What's Next?**

Hopefully these tips and the resources that we're putting together for you will be helpful to you as you prepare. In next week's article, we'll have some tips for you on preparing your own BCDR plan. If you have any questions, or if you have a topic that you'd like us to address in a future article, please reach out to your RAM or MAM and let us know!