

BEYOND COVID: WHY YOU NEED A LONG-TERM INFECTION CONTROL PROGRAM

WHITE PAPER

When COVID-19 first emerged in the United States, many companies were caught off guard. Nearly overnight, the virus swept through workforces, locked down entire cities, and caused long-term disruption to supply chains.

HR managers are still grappling with the impact, from OSHA compliance to an employee mental health crisis the extent of which has only just started to take shape. An increasing number of COVID-related employee lawsuits has further complicated recovery for some companies.

Even as vaccination has led to an easing of restrictions, and an enticing glimpse of normalcy, savvy employers have begun reviewing their response to the pandemic and asking how to better manage infectious disease.

In this paper we explain how an infection control program can help companies protect their employees' health, withstand liability, and mitigate the long-term impact of illness in the workplace. We also offer strategies to help employers safeguard against outbreaks of Flu, strep and other seasonal infections.



THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE INFECTION

Work-related illness is costly. Between absenteeism and lost productivity, employers can expect to lose more than \$200 billion a year.¹ Workplace infections also increase employee anxiety, affect workplace morale, and lead to ongoing disruptions as infections spread to workers and their families.

And yet, many employees underestimate the risks of infectious disease. Half of Americans fail to get a Flu shot every year, and 40 percent say they don't always wash their hands after using the restroom.² This mindset is one reason why companies enact infection control programs. Without procedures in place to remind employees of the risks, contagious illnesses can quickly spread.

Government obligations are another reason to prepare for workplace infection. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) holds companies responsible for any work-related infection and may launch an onsite investigation in the event of an outbreak. Employers who have failed to act appropriately to protect their workers may face fines or penalties. Employers must also report positive cases of certain viruses and maintain records of employee illnesses.

Complicated legal requirements are just one reason that many companies prefer to partner with a workplace infection consultant to mitigate risk and liability.



¹ <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/pr/2015/worker-illness-and-injury-costs-us-employers-225-billion-annually>

² <https://today.yougov.com/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2020/01/30/hand-washing-soap-poll-survey>

OSHA REQUIREMENTS EXPLAINED

Most companies understand that OSHA requires them to provide a safe and healthy workplace, but the specific obligations can be confusing, particularly for smaller businesses without full-scale HR resources. Here's what you need to know to stay compliant.

OSHA requires recordkeeping of 5 years for any illness that results in one or more of the following:

-  Days away from work
-  Restricted work
-  Transfer to another job
-  Medical treatment beyond first aid



Any positive case of COVID-19 requires reporting. OSHA also monitors companies for the spread of Flu, strep, pneumonia, and other serious illnesses. Keep in mind that any event satisfying the above requirements requires reporting and may be considered a recordable event.

Employers should also be aware that OSHA continues to closely monitor workplace safety as viruses like the COVID-19 delta variant take hold, resulting in an all-time high of formal complaints and onsite inspections.

Fortunately, companies can protect themselves simply by enacting an infection control program. A proactive plan that combines self-reporting, on-site testing, and detailed reporting is the most effective way to demonstrate appropriate action to OSHA.

ADDRESSING THE LINGERING THREAT OF COVID-19

Despite widespread vaccination in many parts of the country, employers cannot ignore the lingering threat of COVID-19. Here are three reasons to remain prepared for new outbreaks:



NEW VARIANTS

As COVID-19 continues to spread, the risk remains of more contagious or harmful variants emerging. The threat also remains that a future strain may become resistant to existing vaccines. Companies can protect their employees by continuing to promote hygiene best practices.



LITIGATION

As increasing numbers of employees sue their employers after becoming infected or exposed to COVID-19, companies must prepare for the possibility of new cases. Remaining diligent about COVID-19 safety measures, following all suggested CDC guidelines, and keeping detailed records can protect companies against lawsuits.



VACCINE COMPLACENCY

Although many Americans rushed to get vaccinated for COVID-19, seasonal Flu shot data suggests that this enthusiasm isn't likely to last. As vaccine protection lessens over time, all employees may become more susceptible to new outbreaks without a booster shot. To combat vaccine complacency, companies will need a plan to proactively encourage seasonal vaccination and educate employees about the need to keep their vaccines current.



UNVACCINATED WORKERS

As of July 2021, just 38 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 had received a full dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.³ For companies with large numbers of young employees working in close proximity, fast-spreading variants like delta could lead to new outbreaks. Companies must have a plan to educate young employees about the benefits of vaccination, and a way to make the process seamless for those willing to get their shot.

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7025e1.htm>

BE PREPARED WITH AXIOM MEDICAL'S INFECTION CONTROL PROGRAM

The Axiom Medical Infection Control Program helps employers stay OSHA compliant and ready for potential liability with turn-key measures that leverage our team's deep experience with illness mitigation in the workplace. With each product option, we provide configurable policies and procedures specific to a company's environment and employee population. Companies choose from three flexible tiers:

01

TIER 1 INFECTION CONTROL POLICY

Axiom will draft an infection control policy to meet the needs of your organization.

02

TIER 2 POLICY + CONSULTING

With this elevated offering, Axiom will draft an infection control policy to meet the needs of your organization and provide up to 10 hours of risk leveling HR consulting.

03

TIER 3 COMPREHENSIVE ACTIVE MANAGEMENT

This full-service option adds comprehensive solutions and active management for seamless execution. In addition to infection control policy development and up to 10 hours of risk leveling HR consulting, Axiom Medical provides daily health screening with the CheckIn2Work app and support of secondary assessment and case management with the Contagious Respiratory Illness Assessment (CRIA) program.

All the Axiom Medical support programs meet reporting criteria for ESG investing.



MORE TOOLS TO PROTECT YOUR WORKFORCE

Axiom Medical offers a suite of practical tools to mitigate the risk of infectious illness transmission and outbreak within the workplace. Use these products to identify respiratory illnesses, improve employee wellness, and detect fast-spreading infections like Flu and strep.



CHECKIN2WORK APP

Our signature daily health screening app delivers quick, self-reported health attestations before employees arrive at the workplace, providing point of entry protection.



CONTAGIOUS RESPIRATORY ILLNESS PROGRAM

This program provides secondary screening and assessment of employees experiencing respiratory illness symptoms, including case management until an employee is cleared to return to work.



ON-SITE TESTING

Axiom brings testing directly to your workplace for COVID, Flu, strep and other common infectious illnesses. We also provide onsite, mobile vaccination for the Flu, helping you safeguard more employees from seasonal illness.

As infectious disease management becomes part of the “new normal” for most companies, a long-term infection control program is an important part of mitigating risk, managing liability, and keeping employees safe and healthy. Axiom Medical’s comprehensive programs and self-serve tools give you the peace of mind that your employees, and your company, are fully protected.