# Pandemic Dependent Care Policy

# Introduction: How to Use This Tool

This template provides a framework for a comprehensive policy in the case of a pandemic breakout within your region.

The following sections are included in this template:

* Guiding Principles and Definitions
* Pandemic Alert Phases and Actions
* Mission-Critical Functions/Operations
* Employee Expectations
* Emergency Contacts and Networks

To use this tool, fill in the blanks indicated by square brackets, and delete the introductory and explanatory text in dark grey.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Policy Title** | Pandemic Dependent Care Policy |
| **Policy Owner** | HR / IT |
| **Policy Approver(s)** | Insert name, e.g. VP of HR |
| **Related Policies** | Compensation  Sick Leave  Personal Leave  Vacation  Flexible/Telework  Benefits  Federal and State/Provincial Labor Legislation |
| **Related Procedures** | Name other related enterprise procedures both within or external to this policy |
| **Storage Location** | Describe physical or digital location of copies of this policy |
| **Effective Date** | List the date that this policy went into effect |
| **Next Review Date** | List the date that this policy must undergo review and update |

# Purpose

A pandemic outbreak can have severe consequences on human health and economic wellbeing. [Company name] is committed to advance planning and preparedness that are critical in mitigating the impact of a pandemic on the organization and our employees. One of the downstream effects of a pandemic can be a reduction, and in some cases, closure of many regular services that employees rely on for child, elder, and other dependent care. This policy outlines the specific steps taken by [company name] to ensure full safety and wellbeing of our employees while they continue to work and simultaneously care for dependents.

# ****Scope****

In the event of a pandemic outbreak that disrupts regular dependent care services, this policy governs the action plans to be taken. This policy works in conjunction with [company name]’s pandemic response policy and crisis management plan, and those lines of authority are preserved. Employees are requested to provide as much information as possible to protect our workforce and all critical operations to the organization.

# Governing Legislation

Use this section to list the relevant laws and regulations. This template represents best practices only and does not ensure legal compliance. You may have additional obligations pursuant to the federal and/or provincial, state, or territory laws and regulations applicable to your jurisdiction. Consult the applicable laws and legislation and review this policy with your legal counsel before implementation to ensure full legal compliance.

Based on the disease outbreak, regulations and policies applied may differ. Please refer to the following government link for a list of possible outbreaks:

Canada: [Public Health Agency of Canada](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/index-eng.php)

United States: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://emergency.cdc.gov/recentincidents/)

# Guiding Principles

**Respect for People:**

Treating all people with respect, dignity, and fairness and creating a safe and healthy work environment that promotes engagement, openness, and transparency.

**Employee Safety:**

To safeguard the health and wellbeing of individual members of the organization in accordance with the referred policies.

**Business Continuity:**

To protect the academic mission of the organization through continuity of core activities. To protect the long-term interests of the organization.

# Definitions

**Pandemic:** As defined by WHO (World Health Organization), a widespread epidemic affecting a large part of the population.

**Infectious Disease:** Infectious diseases are caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, or fungi; the diseases can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another. Zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases of animals that can cause disease when transmitted to humans.

**Dependent:** An individual being cared for in a parent-child relationship. The “child” can include any biological, adoptive, foster, step-child, legal ward, or even friend or family member who is under the responsible care of another adult because their own parent was not able to raise them. Elders being cared for by children are also covered within this definition.

The following table highlights the action that will be taken by [company name] under each phase of outbreak.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pandemic Period** | **Phase** | **Actions to Be Undertaken** | **Assumptions of Operating Environment** |
| Inter-Pandemic Period | Phase I | See actions detailed in primary Pandemic Policy. During this stage there is no anticipated work from home or disruption to regular dependent care services. | **Business as Usual:** Staff will have access to core infrastructure, supplies, and freedom of movement within permitted areas of the organizational premises/or will have full access to work remotely if physical presence onsite is not permitted.  **Attendance:** Unless an identified carrier or a potential hazard to public health and safety, staff identified as part of the mission-critical functions will come to work in accordance with their regular schedules. Should a decision be made to restrict access to physical work site, staff who are equipped to work remotely must do so in accordance with their regular schedules. Temporary modifications to work schedules may be implemented in response to employee need balanced with operational continuity.  **Payroll:** Staff will continue to be paid in accordance to their contract or in keeping with the provisions of this policy should temporary change of working hours and pay be agreed upon.  **Security:** The organization will ensure that all law and order is maintained and that employee’s health and security is not compromised under any circumstances.  **IT Network/Infrastructure:** Communications and network systems will remain operational, unless under unforeseen circumstances. |
| Phase II |
| Pandemic Alert Period | Phase III |
| Phase IV |
| Phase V | Insert plans of action and communication here, e.g. employees will be notified of shut down until further notice. | **Operational Shut Down:** All operations will be shut down until notice of clearance is issued by the Government of [insert issuing government].  **Payroll:** Staff will continue to be paid for the first [insert number] months/days after issuance of shut down. |
| Pandemic Period | Phase VI | Insert plans of action and communication here, e.g. employees will be kept up to date by communications distributed through employee emails and company intranet. |
| Post Pandemic Period |  | Insert start up plans here, e.g. company will contact employees pertaining to essential operations via email/phone. | **Business as Usual:** Staff will have access to core infrastructure and supplies. |

# Notice of Temporary Work Measures & Coverage Planning

[Company name] will promptly notify all internal and external stakeholders about the change in operations due to downstream effects of a pandemic outbreak. The notice will be communicated by **[list possible communication sources/media]**.

A first measure of helping employees balance caregiving of children and elders will be for senior leadership to carry out department-wide coverage planning. Leadership will set temporary thresholds for coverage based on available data relating to essential vs. non-essential functions, current coverage needs, skill inventories, and productivity measures, etc. Managers will use the parameters set by senior leadership as a basis for developing team-specific work coverage plans.

During a brief period of implementation, managers and employees will monitor relevant data to determine if work plans are succeeding or if revision is necessary; and in the event that team-specific work coverage plans are not reasonable for some individual employee circumstances, then alternate measures can be discussed with management.

In this scenario it is important to work with the employee to identify if there are flexible work arrangements that can put in place at the individual level that will help continue to work productively while juggling other personal priorities. After a period of working under a temporary alternate work measure, the arrangement will be revisited to ensure it is meeting the needs of both the operation and the employee.

As a last resort, should barriers arise that lessen the effectiveness of the alternative chosen, options will be available to employees to voluntarily reduce their hours and pay. Details on how this can be implemented are contained in the following pages.

# Individual Employee Support

For individuals who must remain at home to care for ill family members or provide dependent care during school or regular care provider closures, a contingency plan is encouraged. The employee may arrange for alternative sources of child/elder/medical care and will speak to their manager about the opportunity to work on an alternative schedule or temporarily revise their duties and expected levels of performance. In the event alternate dependent care measures conflict with the employee’s ability to work at full capacity while remote, the employer and employee must discuss and reach formal agreement on a solution that aims to meet both the needs of employee and business.

Should the dependent care disruption be anticipated to last between 5-10 working days, and the employee expects they can work a minimum of 50% of their regularly scheduled hours, then the employee will receive full pay. In the event the employee expects that longer-term (11+ working days) measures may necessary to continue working while caring for dependents, they may voluntarily request a reduction in hours for a temporary period. The options available to the employee will result in an alignment of pay to the percentage of time worked, as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Longer-Term Hours Reduction** | ***Examples*** |
| Minor Drop in Hours | 0.8-1.0 (80-100% working hours) = 100% pay  0.6 (60% working hours) = 60% of pay | *NOTES:*   * *FTE = Full-Time Equivalent*   Example: Five-day work week  (40 hours/week)   * + 5 days = 40 hours = 1.0 FTE   + 4 days = 32 hours = 0.8   + 3 days = 24 hours = 0.6 * 2 days = 16 hours = 0.4 * 1 day = 8 hours = 0.2 |
| Majority Drop in Hours | 0.4 (40% working hours) = 40% of pay  0.2 (20% working hours) = 20% of pay |

Mental health and wellbeing are also important considerations when working from home while also caring for dependents. The tensions surrounding a pandemic make it especially important to support staff in maintaining mental wellbeing while working remotely. Caretaking during a pandemic comes with additional considerations:

* Children can require additional reassurance, attention, and opportunities to express their feelings.
* Consult trusted resources on how to talk to your child about COVID-19, such as the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html).
* Ensure employees maintain time for self-care, in addition to work and caretaking duties; adjust performance expectations temporarily if necessary.

Also ensure staff are aware of existing mental health support opportunities within their organization and the community:

* Relevant mental health benefits, health insurance coverage available through the organization.
* Remind staff of eligibility of dependents for these benefits.
* Existing or new mental health programs in the organization (e.g. yoga, meditation, scheduled coffee breaks).
* Community support contacts, such as crisis hotline numbers.

# Expectations

**Attendance:** All employees are expected to abide by the regular attendance guidelines and leave policies. In the event that an employee feels ill and is displaying any of the following symptoms: [list symptoms here], they are encouraged to stay at home. Coming to work compromises the safety of others in the organization and any employee who reports to work when ill will be sent home. This period will fall under the employee’s paid sick leave, and [company name] will compensate the employee accordingly. This is also applicable in the event that an employee has been quarantined by a medical or governmental body.

**Social Distancing:** In [Phase II] of the pandemic outbreak, [company name] will put into place social distancing guidelines for employees, to reduce the risk of infection within the workplace as follows:

* Avoid gathering in areas of socialization, busy coffee shops, grocery stores, etc.
* Make sure to eat at home or in areas away from larger crowds.
* Avoid face-to-face meetings even if the colleague lives in your general vicinity. Opt for alternative forms of communication such as telephone, video conference, or internet chat. For pick-ups or deliveries, have all materials required at hand to minimize contact time.
* In the event that a face-to-face meeting cannot be avoided, opt for a larger meeting space, sit with considerable distance between each participant and avoid any physical contact, such as shaking hands.
* Prioritize your work and avoid those that are unnecessary, especially if it involves travel.

**Performance:** Once an agreement has been reached on levels of performance expected during temporary work measures, employees are responsible for meeting the level that has been established. In the event there are challenges meeting the temporary levels that have been set, both the employee and manager have a responsibility to discuss any gaps and need to revisit temporary agreements with the other party.

**Communication:** Both the manager and employee are expected to maintain regular communication with one another to ensure temporary work measures are continuing to be successful or any barriers to success are being actively managed and course corrected.

## Managing Ongoing Changes: Given the rapidly evolving scenarios that can arise during a pandemic it is likely adjustments to even temporary agreements may be necessary. If this occurs, changes should be managed through the following process:

1. Changing circumstances result in a need to revise the temporary hours accommodation.
2. Employee to notify manager or vice versa:
   * If a temporary short-term disruption to agreed-upon plan, then notify as soon as reasonably possible.
   * Should it be expected to be a longer-term adjustment, provide one week notice of requested/required change.
3. If longer-term/substantive change to the temporary reduction in hours, then revise formal agreement for signature by both parties.
   * If regular dependent care services are restored, then the employee is required to discuss timeliness for return to full hours of work, even if they are still working from home.

## Policy Ownership and Maintenance

This policy and contacts are maintained and updated by [employee name/department name, e.g. Department of Safety and Risk Management]. For any questions, concerns, or comments, employees are encouraged to speak to [any of our employees or managers] or to contact us by **[insert communication methods, e.g. email, telephone, suggestion box, feedback card]**.

In the case of an emergency where this policy does not provide clear guidelines for action, [employee name] will be assigned as the Health and Safety Manager, responsible for coordinating and ensuring that the safety of the organization and its employees remains uncompromised.

## Employee Declaration

I, , hereby acknowledge that I have read and understood [company name]’s Pandemic Dependent Care Policy. I agree to abide by the terms and conditions of this policy and ensure that persons working under my supervision abide by the terms and conditions of this policy. I understand that if I violate or fail to comply with this policy, I may face legal or disciplinary action according to applicable laws or other [company name] policies.

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Employee Signature Date

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Manager Signature Date

### Revision History

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Change** | **Author** | **Date of Change** |
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