Human Resource FAQs for May 29, 2020

As Connecticut grapples with re-opening, WBDC clients with employees may face key questions, some with straight answers and some answers still developing. Here are a few questions we have been discussing over the last few weeks.

1. I reached out to the State’s COVID Joint Information Center Team and asked what happens if an employee tells the employer h/s cannot wear a mask for medical reasons and there is not contactless work for the employee.
   a. The response from the COVID Joint Information Center is that the employee can continue to work without a mask, work from home or not work at all. I received the website for future questions: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Coronavirus/COVID-19-FAQs.pdf?la=en.
   b. In my professional view, if you are going to let an employee return to work without a mask, you may be creating an expectation and setting a precedent that affects other employees and can affect your customers. I would tread lightly here and if possible keep the employee working remotely or place the employee in a position that has no contact. No easy answers.

2. If I am re-opening do I have to report my rehired employees or new to CT DOL?
   a. Yes.
   b. Here is the link to report new hires and rehires: https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/newhires/faq.asp.

3. I have asked my employees to return to work, but the employee is either unable to return to work or is concerned about returning. What happens to the employees’ UI?
   a. CT’s Department of Labor determines eligibility for UI. If your employee refuses your offer to return to work, ask the employee why, document the reason provided and send a letter on company letterhead to CTDOL with the employee name, social security number, date of refusal, work start date, your contact information, including fax number (or cell) and fax your information to the Merit Rating Unit fax at 860-263-6723.
4. Can I open my hair salon on June 1, 2020?
   a. New information posted on the CT COVID Portal, hair salons will re-open on June 1, 2020. The governor feels more owners are better prepared to re-open. However, everyone must following specific sector rules and if for some reason the key metrics tracked in the state spike in the wrong direction, the governor can change his order. Check the website for the more recent information. https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus
   b. Also listed in CT COVID Portal is an advisory for nail salons, spas and tattoo parlors, which according to state guidelines at this time will remain closed until at least June 20, unless earlier modified

5. Can I “screen” employees for virus symptoms each day before work?
   a. Yes, you can or you can set a guideline for self-monitoring. CDC recommends as well as RE-OPEN CT that an on-site leader be appointed to manage new safety protocols, watch over self-monitoring and answer employee questions. The most common screen is the temperature screen but it is not hard to ask how the employee is feeling at the start of the shift. You can document your conversation with a note to a separate file.

6. Can I screen customers?
   a. The practice of screening customers at this point appears to be focused on temperature checks and proper masks. You are not required to check temperatures of customers. Some businesses in Connecticut like grocery stores are doing so. Customer temperatures are not tracked and no records are retained. As a business owner, you can ask if the customer has any virus symptoms, which are not tracked. The questions are really used to screen entry into your business. You can require customer masks or ask a customer not to enter without a mask because your responsibility is to maintain a safe environment for yourself, your employees and your customers.

7. There is a question about whether a grandparent taking care of a grandchild because their own child is an essential worker, might be covered under the CARES Act. Thus far, both Sherry and I do not think there is a provision for grandchildren, but we are hoping to get more information next week. Stay tuned.

If you have human resource questions not answered here, you are welcome to reach out to WBDC Volunteer, Deb Gogliettino, DEBGHR, LLC at 203-470-6652 or dghrlc@gmail.com.