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HR's Role in Pandemic Planning

BUA 330

MARCH 5, 2020

Current Concern Covid-19

- ❑ Virus originated in China, now present in 78 countries and spreading quickly in some areas
- ❑ 93,000 cases worldwide
- ❑ 3,200 deaths worldwide
- ❑ Cases in 17 US states
- ❑ 11 deaths in US (10 in Washington state, 1 in California)

Covid-19

- ❑ President Trump appointed VP Pence to lead government efforts
- ❑ Several US states have declared public health emergencies
- ❑ CDC has released guidance for employers, schools, communities, churches, etc.

Covid-19

- Gov. Mills has appointed a response team led by the director of the Maine CDC
- University has taken action to limit international travel and is considering further actions as needed
 - All students should review messages on the portal and update their contact info for emergency alerts.

H1N1 Influenza in 2009

- ❑ A unique combination of influenza genes never previously identified in animals or people
- ❑ First detected in April 2009 in a 10-year old in California
- ❑ CDC set up Emergency Operations Centers and declared a public health emergency
- ❑ Work on vaccine started

H1N1 2009 cont'd

- ❑ Concerns resulted in some school closures and distancing measures
- ❑ World Health Organization declared a global pandemic 6/11/09
- ❑ Cases in all 50 states and DC by 6/19/09
- ❑ Estimated 1 million cases in US 6/25/09

H1N1 2009 Outcomes

- From April to Dec. 12, 2009, estimated impact in US
 - 55 million cases
 - 246,000 hospitalizations
 - 11,160 deaths

- H1N1 is now a regular influenza that circulates seasonally

UMS HR Planning for H1N1

- ❑ HR was part of a planning group that explored how UMS would proceed if there was a large outbreak of H1N1
- ❑ Eventualities looked at included the need to close the campus before the end of the semester or delay the start of the next semester, and to cancel large events including commencement
- ❑ Fortunately these actions were not required

HR's Role in Planning

- ❑ HR was called on to answer many questions about scenarios based on current policies and collective bargaining agreements, laws and public health recommendations.
- ❑ Questions raised included:
 - ❑ What will happen if employees exhaust paid leave amounts?
 - ❑ Will emergency funds be available for employees?
 - ❑ Will student employees be paid if unable to work?

HR questions for pandemic

- Will absences for employee and family illness require medical certification?
- Will absences require return to work certification?
- What leave may be used if employee is quarantined? (State law requires reasonable and necessary leave be granted with or without pay in public health emergency.)

HR questions for pandemic

- Would we develop a sick leave bank in the case of pandemic?
- Can employer mandate that employees not come to work when they are sick? (How enforce?)
- How long will a position be held for an employee?
- May an employee use paid leave to care for sick family members?

HR questions for pandemic

- Do short and long-term disability insurance coverages include pandemic situations?
- Will Worker's Compensation cover employees who contract the illness at work?
- Do we have the capacity to deliver needed counseling services to employees?
- What work can be done from home for employees who are sick, caring for family or quarantined, or if the campus is closed?

HR Pandemic Planning Questions

- How will essential functions and essential personnel be identified?
- How will payroll operations be continued?
- Can we mandate that employees who are deemed essential work?
- Could UMS revise the academic year (beginning and end of semesters)?
- To what extent can we assign work outside of job descriptions in order to continue operations?

HR Pandemic Planning Questions

- What pay policies apply if the university is closed, selected buildings are closed, or public events are cancelled?
- Will central reporting of absences be required in order to track the spread of illness?
- Will the university prohibit travel to certain areas?
- Will the university require employees to report that have traveled to affected areas?

HR Pandemic Planning Questions

- Will there be mandatory training regarding prevention and response?
- What communication channels will be used?
- Are there special considerations for people with disabilities and other high risk groups?
- How will issues that require collective bargaining be addressed?

HR Pandemic Planning Questions

- If there are community volunteers for emergency situations, does that conflict with workplace rules, policies or procedures?

