

COVID-19 TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

HOW TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE





This year, our world has changed. Issues that seemed to be of utmost importance have now been replaced by worrying about our health, our finances and our jobs.

Employers are dealing with how to keep their businesses running and how to treat their employees fairly, while still needing to manage the needs of the business. All of us are dealing with concerns around our health, childcare as well as concerns about family, friends and our society in general. We all have a big load to carry.

There are many articles and sources of information out there and it can be hard to know where to look or what to believe. To help you out, we have put together a guide with tips for both employees and employers.

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS



Protect Your Employees

★ Allow your employees to work from home, if they can.

- Be kind and understanding – many don't have permanent offices at home and others will have children they are also minding due to lack of school and childcare.
- Be flexible – other than team meetings, work can be done outside of normal working hours which may ease the stress of working from home with child or eldercare responsibilities.

★ Identify and address any new hazards or how hazards may look different when people work from home.

- Your team members can still be bullied and harassed remotely. Keep an eye out during team meetings and check in regularly to make sure everyone is being respectful.
- Poor or disrespectful behaviour tends to come out during times of stress. While being understanding, don't let unacceptable behaviours go unaddressed or let people use the stress of the pandemic as an excuse.

★ If employees must come into your place of work, set up safe work practices:

- Post safe working guidelines so that all employees know what is expected.
- Ensure employees have safe working areas where they can maintain social distancing.
- Set guidelines as to how many people can be in certain areas at one time (e.g. a lunch room).
- Provide hand sanitization and/or hand cleaning stations. Make sure you have soap, hand sanitizer and paper towels stocked.



TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS



Consider alternatives to permanent layoffs:

- ★ **Temporary layoffs (effective April 6, 2020) allow you to temporarily lay off employees for up to 120 days with no notice period.**

- › Employees can then apply for either Employment Insurance or the Canada Emergency Response Benefit.
- › You get to maintain the employment relationship with the employee for when you are ready to bring employees back to work.

<https://www.alberta.ca/temporary-layoffs.aspx>

- ★ **Work-sharing allows employees to continue to work at reduced hours and to apply for Employment Insurance to help with income support.**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/work-sharing.html>

- ★ **Allow employees to take unused, banked vacation prior to being laid off. This will help with your vacation liability and will help employees retain some income during this period of time.**

- ★ **Ask your team for suggestions, they may be able to come up with great ideas as to how to support the organization during this difficult time.**



TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS



Stay Up to Date

- ★ Stay informed of what is happening. Things are changing daily so it is important for employers to stay on top of those changes.
- ★ Make sure you are getting your information from reliable sources. There is a lot of misinformation out there, so get your information from trusted sources only.
- ★ Use qualified resources to help you with any work that you have.
- ★ Sign up for information emails from trusted companies and news agencies.
- ★ There are many great resources out there for you to use, including:

Service Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/portfolio/service-canada.html>

Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

Alberta Employment Standards

<https://www.alberta.ca/employment-standards.aspx>

Alberta Health Services

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/>

CBC News

<https://www.cbc.ca/news>

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS



Look for Opportunities

- ★ Are there new ways for your business to operate during this time?
- ★ Are there new business lines that you can take advantage of?
- ★ How can you help your clients now, so they remember you in the future?
- ★ How can your employees be part of that solution? One idea might be to have a contest to get employees thinking outside of the box of how to best meet your clients' needs during this time.
- ★ This is now also a great time to get to all those things done that you never have time to do, whether they be new product or service ideas or cleaning up your files.

Prepare a Post Pandemic Plan

- ★ The COVID-19 pandemic won't last forever. While your business may have slowed down during this time, what will you do when things start to pick up again?
- ★ Think about if your business will open all at once or if you might have a gradual opening. How will you manage and prepare for employees to come back to work? How will you keep them safe? What communications will go to your clients?
- ★ Think about how the COVID-19 pandemic may have changed your business in a positive way (maybe you were able to offer services in a different way or found that employees working from home were very effective). Think about how you may want to implement those changes in the future.
- ★ Consider how you are going to bring employees back from temporary layoffs. How will you re-integrate them into the workforce? How might their day-to-day jobs have changed as a result of the pandemic.



Protect Yourself and Your Family

- ★ Follow all recommended steps from federal and provincial health care professionals and the government.
- ★ Take proper precautions as are being recommended.
- ★ Stay up to date on COVID-19 health information by utilizing trusted sources of information:

The World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/>

Health Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

Alberta Health Services

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/>





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TIPS FOR EMPLOYEES

Take Care of the Details

- ★ Employers are going through difficult times right now and are having to make difficult decisions around reducing working hours or laying off employees.
- ★ Know where to go for information about what programs are available to you if your work hours are reduced or if you are laid off.
- ★ Take advantage of mortgage and other payment deferrals to help alleviate any financial stress.
- ★ Talk to your landlord to see if you can defer rent payments.
- ★ Take a look at this infographic around support systems that are available to Canadians

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR CANADIANS

The Canadian government is rolling out different levels of support through April and May 2020.



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1 INCREASED CANADA CHILD BENEFIT

Canadian government is proposing to increase the Canada Child Benefit by \$300 per child, effective May 2020 payment.



2 TAX RELIEF UNTIL JUNE 1, 2020

CRA is deferring filing of 2019 income taxes until June 1, 2020.

CRA will allow Canadians to defer income tax payments until after August 31, 2020



3 MORTGAGE SUPPORT

CMHC will support homeowners who are having financial difficulty by deferring payments and making special payment arrangements. Several banks, including ATB Financial, are also making special mortgage arrangements for clients.



4 BETTER ACCESS TO EI

The government is waiving the one week waiting period for those who are sick, quarantined, or required to stay home and care for children.



5 EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT

This benefit will provide \$2000 per month for 4 months to workers who have lost their income as a result of COVID 19.

This benefit also applies to individuals who aren't eligible for EI benefits.



6 SUPPORT FOR SENIORS AND STUDENTS

Minimum withdrawals from RRIFs are being reduced by 25% for 2020.

Student loan payments will be able to be deferred up to 6 months interest free.



7 SUPPORT FOR LOW/MODEST INCOME EARNERS

Eligible individuals will receive a one time payment by early May through the GST credit.

Women's shelters, sexual assault centres, indigenous support groups and the homeless will also have additional support measures.

Practice Wellness

- ★ While working at home, it is easy to fall out of your regular routine. Try to keep a routine to give you and your family a sense of normalcy and certainty.
- ★ Build wellness into your routine – go for a walk or run (keeping in mind social distancing guidelines), yoga, meditation, stretches or whatever exercise you choose.
- ★ Take advantage of companies offering free on-line services. Many companies are offering free services such as tips on how to cut hair, or free on-line workout or yoga videos. See what is out there and if you can take advantage of it.
- ★ Here are a few ideas:

[**20 minute full body workout**](#)

[**Yoga**](#)

[**Pilates**](#)

- ★ Shower and dress every day. Getting ready for the day fills us with a sense of purpose.
- ★ Start your day with gratitude – what are you thankful for? Spending more time with your family? More time at home to tackle projects? Your health? A world where we can still keep in touch with family and friends using social media? In all this chaos, there are still many things to be grateful for.
- ★ I read a terrific article the other day by Scott Berinato at the [**Harvard Business Review**](#). A big shout out to the Harvard Business Review who have made their coronavirus coverage free for all readers.



Make a Plan

- ★ What projects have you been wanting to do around the house? Can you start tackling them now that you have some time at home?
- ★ Make a list of projects and start doing them – no matter how big or small – being productive is healthy. Maybe you want to clean out a closet, clean your cupboards (that's on my list!) or gather up donations to give away when the time is right. Maybe you have bigger plans like painting a room or organizing your home office.
- ★ Making lists is a time-honoured system that is simple and helps us stay organized and feel productive. Lists provide us with a structure, a plan that we can stick to and proof of what we have achieved.

Recognize Your Feelings

- ★ There is a lot going on in our world right now, and this will bring feelings of fear, uncertainty, paralysis and, at times, hope and optimism.
- ★ It is important to recognize how you feel and talk about it.
- ★ Take advantage of your Employee Assistance Program, if there is one available to you. They not only provide counselling and support services but also financial and legal advice and many other services. If you are not sure if you have this program, ask your leader or your human resources department.
- ★ [Alberta Health Services](#) has wonderful resources on their website including a program called Text4Hope which supports mental health and wellness.
- ★ Talk about how you feel with your spouse, family or friends. It can sometimes be a comfort to know you aren't the only one feeling the way you are.
- ★ Set up a group video chat with your friends and family and virtually get together for a coffee or a glass of wine. In the absence of being able to get together in person, this is a great option.



Our team at **ACTivate HR** is sending all our readers caring thoughts for health and happiness.

Please reach out to us at www.activatehr.ca to explore our service offerings and let us know how we can help your team reach success.



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