



## WHY TAKING ACTION IS IMPORTANT TO PROTECT EMPLOYEES, THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is heavily affecting labour markets and economies, including global supply chains, leading to widespread business disruptions. With many businesses struggling to survive, loss of jobs and income and rising working poverty are a reality for many workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has also upended the lives of children and their families as health systems buckle, borders close, and schools and businesses shutter, contributing to strains on employees, customers and their children. Investing in measures that promote the wellbeing of all stakeholders is a critical way for businesses to protect the productivity and longevity of their employees, as well as to support communities where businesses operate at a time when they need it the most. This guide, which is adapted from a UNICEF guide for business, includes measures that business leaders can take to achieve both short- and long-term positive impacts.

### KNOW THE SIGNS

#### Symptoms of coronavirus

According to the World Health Organization, the **most common symptoms** of COVID-19 are:

- > Fever
- > Tiredness
- > Dry cough

These **less common symptoms** are usually mild and develop gradually:

- > Aches and pains
- > Nasal congestion
- > Runny nose
- > Sore throat
- > Diarrhoea



### KNOW THE RISKS TO BETTER PROTECT EMPLOYEES, THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment, but around 1 out of every 6 people becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing.

**Older people** and those with **pre-existing medical conditions** like high blood pressure, heart problems, or diabetes **can be severely affected or die**. It is important to care for the elderly and the most vulnerable.

Though they may not show symptoms, children and young people can unknowingly contribute to the spread of the virus, so appropriate precautions and hygiene measures should be taken.

Children are mostly affected by the pandemic in indirect ways, as it can **affect their primary caregivers, parents, grand parents and family**. In addition, children can suffer from possible **stigma resulting from family members' infections**.

The pandemic also affects children **as schools are closed and access to education is disrupted**. Due to the closure of businesses and the overall impact on countries' economies, children risk **being deprived of basic services such as access to food, water and health care**. Children living in areas with already weak basic services, and from poor and vulnerable families, are especially at risk.

Separated children with no appropriate childcare environment are at **increased risk of child abuse and trafficking** or other child protection concerns.



## ENSURE FAMILY-FRIENDLY BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Implementing measures that support your employees, contractors and their families through COVID-19 does not require a total departure from existing business continuity plans. However, addressing their needs—and supporting global relief efforts—will ensure a faster collective recovery from the crisis and bolster your business' reputation and credibility as a trusted employer.

### GENERAL HYGIENE MEASURES

1. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water.
2. Cover your mouth and nose while sneezing and coughing.
3. Avoid close contact with anyone who has a cold or flu-like symptoms.
4. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, stay home, increase physical distancing (even with family members) and seek medical care.

### DISEASE PREVENTION IN THE WORKPLACE

1. **Stock hygiene items** such as soap and hand sanitiser and encourage employees to do the same.
2. **Ensure hygiene messaging and items are available** (hand washing facilities and toilets with clean running water, soap, a waste disposal bin with a lid, or hand sanitisers with 60% alcohol if running water is not available). Ensure clean breastfeeding and child-care facilities.
3. **Clean workspaces and shared items** and advise employees of strategies to combat the spread of infectious diseases at home.
4. **Utilise alternate communication methods** (e-mail, video, phone calls) to reduce face-to-face contact and respect personal time when scheduling.
5. **Communicate disease prevention guidelines** to your employees and their families in a variety of formats, integrating audio, visual and age-specific approaches.
6. **Postpone events, meetings and non-essential travel** and advise employees to avoid crowded public spaces (excluding trips to purchase essential items).
7. **Place signs on entrances** and ask delivery drivers to call upon arrival or leave packages outside instead of entering lobby or reception areas.
8. **Practice physical distancing** by maintaining a 2-metre distance between staff and visitors and encourage the same behaviours at home for those with symptoms or potentially infectious.

### SUPPORT EMPLOYEES

1. **Explore government support** to avoid job losses and protect employees and contractors.
2. **Encourage employees** and contractors to pre-identify their support networks in case of infection.
3. **Allow for teleworking, flexible work arrangements or diminished workload** to enable caregivers to take care of families at home, or for staff with pre-existing medical conditions and for pregnant women.
4. **Use sensitivity** when addressing short-term productivity losses or absences due to childcare disruption or family illness.
5. **Update business continuity plans** and incorporate family-friendly measures when possible.
6. **Provide medical support** which could include testing site details, emergency numbers, health updates, telemedicine and/or psychological services.
7. **Review human resources policies**, workplace leave flexibilities and benefits plans and advise staff of any changes.
8. **Develop plans to support staff** who need additional resources to complete their work.
9. **Support family preparedness** by identifying alternative care for children in case parents, caregivers or grandparents are infected, and avoid having the elderly care for children. Keep track of family/colleagues' alternative care contact numbers.
10. **Provide education or entertainment materials** to encourage positive relationships in the family and help employees navigate confinement.



## COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

1. **Update staff contact lists** and institute regular updates by e-mail and phone.
2. **Create a mechanism** to safely address staff questions and concerns.
3. **Minimise feelings of isolation and loneliness** for remote workers by holding regular bilateral, team and client calls.
4. **Leverage social media channels** to share advisories from government agencies and updates about business operations.
5. **Share best practices** with other businesses in your community (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce and associations to improve community response efforts.
6. **Maintain close relationships** with the community by addressing client concerns in a timely manner and developing innovative methods to engage target audience.
7. **Consider charitable giving** to help less fortunate members of the community—either through financial contributions or by donating unused supplies (toilet paper, soap) from workspaces that are closed.
8. **Think globally, act locally** and support global relief efforts through financial or in-kind donations if your business has the means.
9. **Share this list** of family preparedness measures with your supply chain, business networks and within your community.

## PREVENT STIGMA

1. **Use neutral language** about people “contracting,” “affected by,” “treated” or “recovering from” COVID-19.
2. **Help avoid discrimination**, reinforce that anyone is susceptible to contracting the virus and talk about coronavirus without stigmatising specific ethnic, minority or religious group.
3. **Combat rumours and misinformation** that generate fear by communicating information from trusted sources to your employees and their families/children in a child-appropriate way.

## FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES

If your business is an essential service (health, social work, water and sanitation, food and essential goods, energy, ICT, road repair, banks, payroll), here are some additional steps to take to support employees and their families.

1. **Implement a plan to ensure continuity of essential services**, especially in poor or remote areas or where vulnerable families live.
2. **Provide basic hygiene and protective equipment** for staff who interact with the general public.
3. **Support essential staff to identify day care providers**, ensuring that they comply with physical distancing measures.
4. **Implement physical distancing procedures** and, when possible, create priority lines or hours to protect the elderly, pregnant women and women with children, people with disabilities and other at-risk and vulnerable people.

## FOR MEDIA, SOCIAL MEDIA, ICT AND CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE FOCUSED BUSINESSES

1. **Communicate disease prevention** behaviours in an age appropriate manner and avoiding stigma.
2. **Provide educational games, TV/radio programmes and distance entertainment** for children at free or reduced costs to help them navigate confinement.
3. **Support continuity of education** through distance measures such as online platforms, telephone or by using other innovative mechanisms.



## ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

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**ICC's COVID-19 Strategic Response Team**  
33-43 avenue du Président Wilson, 75116 Paris, France  
T +33 (0)1 49 53 28 28 E [staysafe@iccwbo.org](mailto:staysafe@iccwbo.org)  
[www.iccwbo.org](http://www.iccwbo.org) [@iccwbo](#)

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**UNICEF's Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division (PFP)**  
Avenue de la Paix 5 - 7, 1202 Genève, Switzerland  
E [AskGeneva@unicef.org](mailto:AskGeneva@unicef.org)  
[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) [@unicef](#)

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