

HOW TO MANAGE ABSENTEEISM IN THE WORKPLACE DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC

The President has on the 15 March 2020 declared the Covid -19 pandemic a National Disaster and announced several extraordinary measures to combat this grave public health emergency. The National Disaster has been declared in terms of the National Disaster Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002) ("the Act "). As a result of this declaration, the Minister of Cooperative Governance (COGTA) has made Regulations in terms of section 27 (2) of the Act. In terms of Regulation 10(8), the Minister empowers various Ministers to issue Directives with regard to the National Disaster in respect of matters falling within their respective mandates.

On the 23rd March 2020, the President announced the national lockdown in order to curb the spread of the Covid -19 pandemic.

In view of the declaration of the National Disaster, in terms of Regulation 10(8)

What does absenteeism mean in this regard?

- Being absent from work without authorization from Management.
- Leaving work early without authorization from Management.
- Poor timekeeping

1. Should an Employer overlook absenteeism in the workplace by an employee who is scheduled to work during the COVID 19 pandemic period?

No.

- The employee must notify the employer immediately once he/she experiences any symptoms of COVID 19 pandemic or any flu like symptoms.
- The employee must inform the employer immediately should he/she be infected with the COVID 19 pandemic.
- The employee must notify the employer immediately if he/she has been in contact with any persons who have been infected with COVID 19 pandemic.
- The employee must inform the employer immediately if he/she has travelled to a COVID 19 pandemic high-risk area.
- The employee must inform the employer immediately if he/she has recently travelled abroad.
- The employee must inform the employer immediately should the employee experience any issues preventing the employee from reporting for duty relating to COVID 19 pandemic e.g. Travel related issues.

2. What steps should the employer take should any of the above be confirmed?

- The employer must ensure that the employee visits a designated health facility to be tested for COVID 19 pandemic.
- The employer must request valid proof that the employee has been tested for COVID 19 pandemic and the results thereof.

- The employer must request valid proof of absence from the employee due to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- If the employee tests negative for the COVID 19 pandemic, the employer must request valid proof of absence from the employee and request the employee to report for duty (If an employee is absent from duty for any other reason which does not relate to the COVID 19 pandemic, the company policies and procedures will be followed)
- If the employee tests positive for the COVID 19 pandemic, the employer must follow the COVID 19 pandemic guidelines issued by the South African Health Department and the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Department of Health and the National Institute of Communicable Diseases.

NB. Any persons experiencing any flu like symptoms or has tested positive for the COVID 19 pandemic or has been exposed to the virus or travelled to a COVID 19 pandemic risk area, must inform management immediately. Failure to do so will lead to disciplinary action been taken against the person which may result in a dismissal, as this spreads the virus and as a result, places lives at risk.