

Coronavirus and the workplace. What does this mean for me?

One of the concerns with the current outbreak is how will the coronavirus affect the employee, the workplace and future employment. Employees and employers have many concerns about the changing environment and the unknown. So how will this new landscape be navigated? What should employees expect?

Per OSHA guidelines, employees are entitled to “workplaces that are free from recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.”

Employers should remind their employees of their policies regarding sick leave. Employees should understand their rights if they get the virus, have to care for someone who was diagnosed with the virus, or are concerned about being in the workplace with others who may be in contact with those with the virus. Employees may be protected by Federal FMLA, NYS FMLA, or worker’s compensation if they got sick at work or during business travel.

Employees should be made aware as to whether they will receive pay during any required leave(s) of absence.

Employers should review their travel policies and the requirements that employees travel for business and to conferences and share this information with their employees so that the employees are aware of what to expect.

Employers must abide by the laws and company policy and reiterate their policies regarding, among others, anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, anti-retaliation, and anti-bullying, in the workplace.

Employers should determine if their business allows for employees to work from home? Are all employees able to work from home? What happens if the employee's children's school closes? Employer's policies, should be clear, consistent and non-discriminatory.

Employers should be mindful of requesting and requiring employees to provide too much medical information from their employees. Any medical information/exams must relate to the job and must be in line with privacy and discrimination laws.

The New York Attorney General's office has recently issued guidelines specific to the coronavirus and the workplace. To view these guidelines click on the following link: <https://ag.ny.gov/coronavirus>.

For more information on your rights and options in the workplace during this time of turmoil, contact Sheree Donath at sheree@donathlaw or at 516-522-2743 to schedule a consultation.