

Electronic Alert

Volume 23, Issue 47

August 11, 2020

It's Time to Prepare for Employees Juggling Online School and Work Again

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On July 28, 2020, Governor Kate Brown announced metrics that will determine whether Oregon's school districts can safely resume in-person learning this fall. Based on the current status, most school districts are likely to begin the school year remotely.

With no end in sight to COVID-19 restrictions, employers should consider how they will support employees juggling work and an unconventional school year. Employers should be prepared for many working parents to request leave or scheduling accommodations as they balance their professional responsibilities with childcare and at-home education. While accommodating working parents and continuing to provide workplace flexibility will help retain talent and morale, employers must also ensure they are in compliance with state and federal laws.

Review Leave Compliance

Employers should proactively review the new and changed leave laws and guidance in preparation for leave requests. Employers covered by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) need to provide covered employees with up to twelve weeks of partially paid leave to employees who cannot work or telework due to the need to care for their children whose place of care or school has closed due to COVID-19. Additionally, eligible employees may use sick time pursuant to Oregon's sick time law as well as unpaid time off in accordance with the Oregon Family Leave Act. In addition to staying current on leave laws, employers may consider whether they can offer more generous leave benefits beyond those that are legally required. This can either be by supplementing partially paid time off or extending the length of leave that may be permitted. See our previous E-Alert for additional information on FFCRA and other protected leave.

Develop or Review Your Work-From-Home Policy

Now is the perfect time to implement or review your work-from-home policies. Remember, these policies can be changed at any time and may be implemented or updated on a temporary basis. The unconventional school year makes teleworking highly beneficial for working parents, even when businesses are permitted to transition back to working in the office. Many large employers have already announced that they will continue to permit teleworking through at least the end of the school year. Any updates to work-from-home policies should be communicated to employees with as much notice as possible, so they will have time to make arrangements as necessary. Additionally, the work-from-home policy should be applied to all employees, regardless of parental status.

Consider Flexible Schedules and Job Shares

With many parents caring for children and assisting with online education during the traditional work day, flexible schedules and job sharing will become invaluable benefits to working parents. If it is not essential for your employees to work the typical 9-to-5 day, consider allowing flexible work hours. If you can support two part-time employees rather than one full-time employee, consider allowing employees to move to job sharing positions. With any flexible schedule or job share, remember to set expectations with employees around availability, flexibility, and expectations.

Get Creative

Some businesses are implementing creative solutions including stipends to help pay for alternative care providers or tutors to supervise online learning. This allows working parents to focus on work responsibilities during business hours. Other businesses are providing laptops or tablets and hot spots for students to use for online learning. Ask your employees what they need most. You may be surprised how some small things may go a long way in making employees efficient and productive.

For more information on Coronavirus related compliance, review our [Coronavirus in the Workplace: Frequently Asked Questions](#).

For more information on policies for working parents during school closures, please contact Amy Angel at 503-276-2195 or aangel@barran.com.