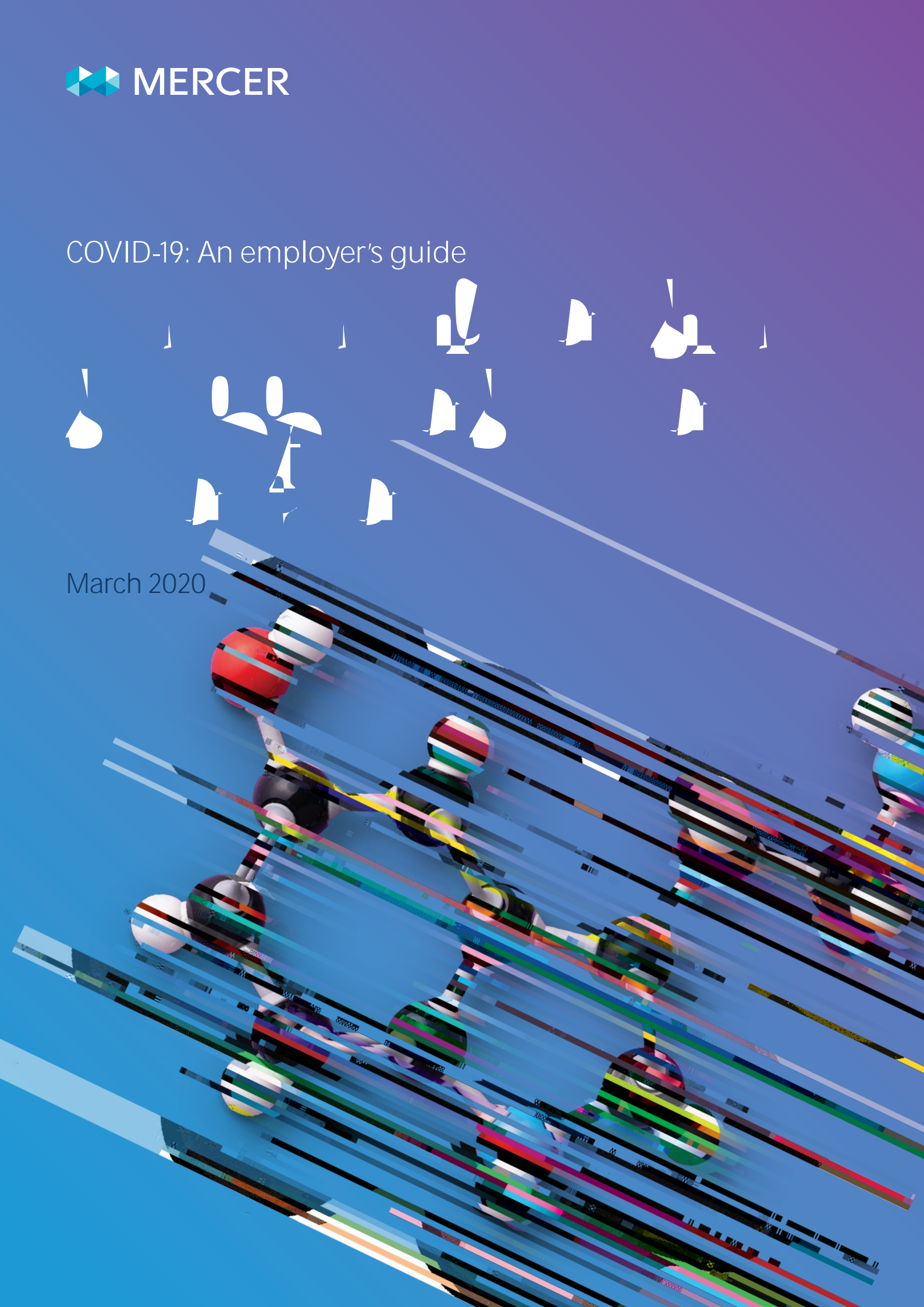


COVID-19: An employer's guide

March 2020



As the situation changes daily, employers should keep up-to-date with the latest developments. Communicate to your employees what is being done to protect them and to maintain business continuity. In addition, all employers need a pandemic/crisis management plan. Consider updating it in relation to COVID-19.

Employers can promote existing support mechanisms to employees and their families. For example, unnecessary exposure to infection at hospitals and care centers can be avoided through virtual care. Telemedicine or digital health are good options for low-level non-epidemic issues.

Other alternatives include health education and evaluation at on-site or near-site clinics, as well as

Travel presents unique health and business challenges during pandemics. Be prepared for travel limitations and delays, including long-time quarantines in some areas. As COVID-19 expands geographically, business travelers can anticipate more screenings, longer waiting times, potential quarantines and refusal of entry.

To limit business disruption and protect their employees, employers need to be proactive. Employees should be discouraged from traveling for business to the impacted regions. Even mild, unrelated injury or illness may be difficult to treat as the medical infrastructures are likely to be exhausted.

Evacuation may be required in some areas. MIA

All employers and employees should collaborate with local health authorities to aid in the prevention and control of COVID-19. Health care workers or those who have been working with COVID-19 patients represent a higher degree of risk, and employers should consult closely with health authorities on definitions for exposure.

Business travelers who are returning from the affected areas should be educated on the symptoms of COVID-19 (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that these travelers should be vigilant for at least 14 days after return).

Employer and employee obligations under employment law will vary from country to country, jurisdiction to jurisdiction. It is important to remind all staff that local public health departments are the primary authority and ultimately responsible for the COVID-19 containment.

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Mercer has developed a framework to help clients work more flexibly. Our Adaptive Working solution allows employees and employers to establish whether workers need to be physically present at the office to complete their work. Our approach is based on a clear and structured methodology to deliver practical and repeatable results — namely, when, where, what, who by and how work is done.

Short-term fixes may be necessary, but lessons from the current crisis will help pinpoint and optimize vulnerable areas before the next crisis hits — especially with regard to flexible working and business process digitization.

Your responses may need to be recalibrated as the virus advances or recedes. But in either case, your employees will need consistent communications throughout. Be sure to develop communication templates, conversation guides and resource guides for managers to adjust their approaches as the situation changes.

Your managers will also need support. Assure them that the key to success is to lead with compassion during the uncertainty. Displaying empathy will yield far greater impact than any terrain knowledge that might apply.

