

Transitioning Back to the Office

After a year of remote working arrangements, the Singapore Government has announced that up to 75% of employees who are able to work from home are now allowed to be at the workplace at any point in time, an increase from the previous 50%. Employers are nevertheless still encouraged to support as many employees in working from home as possible, to reduce possible congregation at or near the workplace, and to reduce congestion in public places, including public transport.

Key things to note about the transition back to the office and the health and safety obligations

For employees who are still unable to attend at the office, employers should review work processes, provide the necessary IT equipment, and adopt solutions that enable remote working and online collaboration.

Particular attention should be given to vulnerable employees, such as those who are aged 60 and above, those who are immunocompromised, and those who have concurrent medical conditions. Employers are encouraged to enable these vulnerable employees to work from home, allow them to travel at off-peak timings, or take other appropriate measures to reduce their risk of exposure.

As far as possible, employers are also encouraged to stagger start times such that at least half of all employees arrive at the workplace at or after 10 AM. For employees who can work from home, but who are returning to the workplace, employers are encouraged to allow flexibility to reduce the duration spent at the workplace while also working from home during the day.

All work-related events must adhere to the 50 persons cap and 1 metre safe distancing. Further, any work-related events should, as far as possible, be held outside mealtimes.

All social and recreational gatherings including farewell gatherings and team bonding activities within or outside the workplace must adhere to the 8 persons cap.

Can employers implement a 'no jab, no job' policy?

Vaccinations are a crucial part of the Singapore Government's efforts to combat COVID-19, with the aim to fully re-open the community and facilitate the recovery of the economy. Whether an employer can implement a 'no jab, no job' policy will depend on whether, in the circumstances, such a policy is reasonable and lawful. In particular, the employer should consider the employee's health and medical history, as well as the employee's roles and responsibilities.

In his Ministerial Statement at Parliament on 4 January 2021, the Minister of Health indicated that it will not be necessary to review the job scope of employees who choose not to be vaccinated, unless there is a resurgence in the number of local cases.

In view of the above, and of the fact that the current rate of COVID-19 transmissions in Singapore is low, employers will unlikely be able to implement a mandatory vaccination policy on its employees.

It is also important to note that information about who has or has not been vaccinated and when or why not will constitute personal data that is protected under the Personal Data Protection Act 2012. While there is an exception to the requirement for consent to collect personal data for the purpose of managing or terminating an employment relationship, employers must still notify their employees of the purpose of such collection.

Should you have any queries as to how this update may affect you or your organisation or require further information, please do not hesitate to email us.



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This article is intended to discuss the requirements for safe management measures at the workplace, and whether employers can implement a 'no jab, no job' policy in Singapore. It is not intended to be comprehensive, nor should it be construed as legal advice. This article is updated as of 28 April 2021.

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