**Archbright™**

**Insights Newsletter**

**July 2019**

**Helping Employees Balance Their Work, Family, and Personal Life**

Recent studies show what all of us in HR have known for years—that helping employees handle their personal stress decreases absenteeism, boosts productivity, and increases employee engagement.

Because managers and HR teams are generally not trained to provide counseling or therapy to employees, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers a way to help employees deal with those life and work issues that fall outside the expertise of their company’s internal resources.

This unique employee benefit supports employees with problems that impact their job performance, health, mental state, and emotional well- being. According to the Department of Labor, EAPs most frequently assist employees dealing with alcoholism, drug abuse, marital difficulties, financial stress, emotional problems, and legal issues.

At Archbright, we partner with KEPRO to provide all members the opportunity to offer the support of an EAP to their workforce at a discounted price. KEPRO’s EAP consultants take a comprehensive approach to identify those issues impacting the employee and assist them in developing meaningful solutions to impact their well- being, performance, and effectiveness.

If you have considered introducing an EAP to your organization, email us at info@archbright.com or call 206.329.1120 or 509.381.1635 for more information.

**Why have an Employee Handbook**

Some employers have asked us…do I legally have to have an employee handbook? The answer may surprise you. No, you don’t HAVE to have an employee handbook. But you SHOULD have an employee handbook. Moreover, we recommend reviewing and updating it every 2 years.

You might think you can get away with just ‘telling’ your employees the ‘rules’ as you come up with them. This is a bad idea because verbal communication can often be misunderstood or forgotten. An employee handbook may serve as the best way to gather, explain, and document the policies, practices, and procedures of your organization in one document.

So do you need an employee handbook? YES…and here’s why…it helps you:

* Provides a valuable communication link between supervisors and employees.
* Eliminates misunderstandings or confusion.
* Communicates with new employees what the company expects of them and what they can expect in return.
* Provides supervisors with a policy guide for fair and consistent treatment of all employees.
* Documents the company’s compliance with state and federal laws.
* May provide a defense against claims of employees who allege they were given certain “verbal promises.”

Eligible Archbright members can find sample policies and resources in the online HR Toolkit and/ or have their handbook reviewed as part of SILVER and GOLD membership by both an HR Advisor and an employment attorney. Eligible members are encouraged to call Archbright’s HR Advice & Counsel team with specific questions or visit Archbright.com for more info!

**Archbright Membership Earns HRCI Credits**

An HR Certification Institute® (HRCI®) certification distinguishes you as a master

in the HR field, with proven levels of skills and knowledge, and the competence necessary to mitigate risks and drive business results.

As an employee of an Archbright member company, you may earn up to 12 HRCI credits simply because of your organization’s current membership status.

This includes:

* For each full year of Archbright membership, earn 3 credits under the MEMBERSHIP category−up to a maximum of 9 credits!
* Earn 3 additional BUSINESS credits - 1 per year for SPHR – under the continuing education category.
* For employees who haven’t yet earned a GPHR, aPHR, PHR, or SPHR certification but are planning on taking the exam, you can receive $50 off the exam fee!

Questions? Contact us at 206.329.1120, 509.381.1635, or info@archbright.com for more information.

**Survey Update:**

Mark your calendars! Archbright is launching our annual Benefits Policies & Trends Survey later this month. More details on how to participate are coming soon!

**“My life would have been so much easier if I had this class 19 years ago as a new manager.”—Supervisory Skills participant**

Supervisory Skills covers the essential skills that supervisors and managers use every day—

* communication,
* feedback,
* coaching,
* delegation,
* discipline,
* documentation, and teamwork.

Designed for those new to their roles as well as those seeking a refresher, the classes are a blend of research, examples, and lots of practice to increase confidence and boost skills.

Supervisory Skills is one of most popular courses we bring to our member locations. If you have a group of ten or more, contact your account executive for more information.

Supervisory Skills is also available at Archbright locations:

Seattle | July 22, 23, & 24

Seattle | Aug 5, 6, & 7

Seattle | Aug 14, 21, & 28

Seattle | Sep 4, 5, & 6

Seattle | Sep 12, 19, & 26

Seattle | Sep 16, 17, & 18

Seattle | Oct 1, 2, & 3

Seattle | Oct 7, 14, & 21

Spokane | Oct 8, 15, & 22

Seattle | Oct 28, 29, & 30

Seattle | Nov 4, 5, & 6

Seattle | Nov 8, 15 & 22

Seattle | Nov 18, 19, & 20

Seattle | Dec 2, 3, & 4

Tacoma | Dec 3, 10, & 17

Seattle | Dec 16, 17 & 18

Open enrollment classes are available all year long at Archbright locations around the state. Register today at Archbright.com for these upcoming sessions.

**Washington Department of Labor & Industries Proposes Overtime Exemption Changes**

On June 5, 2019, the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) released a proposed rule that would significantly update the minimum amount employees must earn before they can be exempt from receiving overtime pay.

L&I is proposing steady increases to the salary threshold an employer would have to pay exempt workers. The draft language states that the size of the employer is based solely on the number of Washington based employees the company employs at the beginning of the effective period. Both full and part time employees count in determining the employer’s size.

Beginning July 1, 2020, employers with 50 or fewer employees would have to pay exempt workers a minimum salary of 1.25 times the minimum wage for a forty-hour workweek ($675 per week). Larger employers would have to pay a minimum salary threshold of 1.75 times the minimum wage for a forty-hour workweek ($945 per week). These amounts will increase yearly based on a multiple of the state’s minimum wage. By 2026, the salary threshold proposed will be 2.5 times the minimum wage, regardless of the size of the employer.

In addition to the salary threshold increase, the proposed rule would simplify the “duties test” to align more closely with the method used at the federal level.

L&I will be holding public hearings throughout the State through September 6, 2019 to gather feedback from stakeholders through a formal rulemaking process.

Our HR Advice and Legal Team is here to help you navigate through these changes and will continue to keep you updated on any further developments. In the meantime, Archbright encourages members to review all jobs classified as exempt to ensure that the current job duties test is clearly satisfied. Eligible members are encouraged to contact an Archbright HR Advisor with any questions regarding exemption status and/or to coordinate a FLSA review by one of our attorneys.

Source: Joy Sturgis, Senior HR Advisor

**Attracting Qualified Candidates is Managers’ Top Hiring Hurdle**

Recruiting is no walk in the park, according to new research from global staffing firm Robert Half. Companies face a number of challenges throughout the hiring process, the greatest being generating interest from qualified candidates (35%), asking the right interview questions (20%), and developing compensation packages and negotiating salaries (19%), as reported by more than 2,800 senior managers.

Making an offer to a candidate isn’t the end of the recruiting road. When asked to name the most common reason prospective hires decide not to join their company, three in 10 senior managers said it’s because the compensation and benefits are lower than expected. An equal number reported that applicants declined to accept another position or counteroffer.

Additional survey findings include:

* Among the 28 U.S. cities in the survey, Indianapolis, Nashville, Cleveland, Sacramento, and Minneapolis have the most employers who said capturing candidates’ interest is their top hiring obstacle.
* The biggest stumbling blocks for senior managers when writing job descriptions are separating essential from preferred qualifications (29%) and identifying the necessary interpersonal and soft skills (24%).
* Aside from poor performance, 30% of senior managers said a mismatched skill set is the leading cause of failed hires. Unclear performance expectations (26%) and personality conflicts (23%) together account for nearly half of hiring mistakes.

“Unemployment is at its lowest level in 50 years, and skilled professionals have more options than ever in terms of where and how they work,” said Paul McDonald, senior executive director for Robert Half. “Companies are stepping up all aspects of their recruiting efforts, relaxing hiring requirements and offering remote jobs to engage prospective candidates and access a broader talent pool, resulting in an even more competitive market.”

Source: Robert Half/CCH.

**Oregon Expands Pregnancy-Related Accommodations for Employees**

Beginning January 1, 2020, Oregon employers must provide reasonable accommodations to employees and job applicants who have limitations related to pregnancy and childbirth, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship. The new law applies to employers with six or more employees.

The Employer Accommodation for Pregnancy Act (EAPA), makes it an unlawful employment practice to deny employment, fail to make reasonable accommodations, or take certain actions because of the employee’s or applicant’s known limitations due to pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition.

The EAPA covers medical conditions related to pregnancy, including childbirth and lactation. The Act also expands protections against pregnancy-related discrimination by making it unlawful for an employer to deny employment to an applicant based upon the need to make a reasonable accommodation; take adverse action against an employee for inquiring about, requesting, or using a reasonable accommodation; require an employee to accept unnecessary reasonable accommodations; or use leave provided under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) instead of a reasonable accommodation.

Suggested reasonable accommodations are defined in the new law and include:

* Acquisition or modification of equipment or devices;
* more frequent or longer break periods or periodic rest;
* assistance with manual labor;
* modification of work schedules or job assignment

A reasonable accommodation constitutes an undue hardship if it requires “significant difficulty or expense.” Generalized conclusions do not support a claim of undue hardship.

In determining whether significant difficulty or expense exists, an employer must consider objective facts such as the nature and cost of the accommodation, the financial resources and size of the facility providing the accommodation, the financial resources and size of the employer, and the type of operations conducted by the employer.

Further, the law mandates employer notice requirements of: 1) provide written notification of the EAPA to new hires at the time of hire and within 180 days of the Act’s effective date (i.e., by June 29, 2020) to all existing employees; 2) written notification within 10 days to an employee who has informed their employer of a pregnancy; and 3) post signs in a conspicuous and accessible location on their premises informing their employees of the protections under the Act.

Eligible members are encouraged to contact an Archbright HR Advisor with any questions regarding these protections or reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees.

Source: Joy Sturgis, Senior HR Advisor

**HR FAQ**

**Question:** We often receive phone calls from credit collection agencies asking for one of our employees. This is disruptive to our workplace and, in general, we do not transfer calls unless it is an emergency or business related. Are we obligated to transfer the call or take a message?

**Answer:** No, you are not obligated to transfer the call or take a message for the employee. We suggest that your receptionist tell the caller that the company discourages personal calls and to not call the employee at work again.

Keep track of the companies that are calling and if they continue to call you can submit a complaint to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. You may also ask the employee to send a letter to the collection agency requesting not to call them at work.

**Archbright Named One of Washington State’s Best Places to Work**

Archbright is pleased to announce we have been named by the Puget Sound Business Journal as one of Washington State’s Best Places to Work!

This spring, thousands of employees from companies around the region completed an employee engagement survey through a special partnership between the Journal and Quantum Workplace. The survey asked questions about company culture and employee work experience.

Washington’s Best Workplaces then recognized the 80 highest ranked companies. We are thrilled to have placed on the list of finalists in our category of 50 to 99 employees.

Archbright will find out where we stand when the final ranking is revealed at Washington’s Best Workplaces event at T-Mobile Park on August 22. The results will then be published in the Journal. Make sure to check out the final list!

**Update on Transgender Inclusion in the Workplace Survey**

In April, Archbright sent out a survey in partnership with the GSBA (Greater Seattle Business Association), the largest LGBTQ and allied chamber of commerce in North America. As a member of the Transgender Economic Empowerment Coalition (TEEC), the GSBA is aligned with other organizations committed to addressing the economic inequities faced by transgender and gender diverse people and LGBTQ people of color.

If you were able to complete the survey, thank you for your participation! The TEEC plans to release the survey results before the end of the year. Archbright will share those results with our members as soon as they are available.

**Preventing Heat Stress in the Workplace**

As the temperatures rise with the summer months fast approaching, one can’t help but think about the impact on the workforce. Every employer has a responsibility to protect their employees from workplace hazards. This must include the proper steps in caring and mitigating potential hazards associated with heat-stress. Heat related hospitalizations are all too common in today’s scientifically proven climate shift.

Hospitalizations for heat-related illness in Washington state range from 25 to 113 people each year, and about 50% are people aged 65 and older. Workplaces with temperatures above 70 degrees Fahrenheit have a potential heat-hazard present when work activities are above that moderate threshold. Although heat hazards are common in both indoor and outdoor work environments, heat-related illnesses and fatalities are preventable.

A heat related illness occurs when there is an increase in a person’s core body temperature exceeding healthy levels. Some common heat-related illnesses include, heat stroke, heat rash, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and Rhabdomyolysis.

The body’s natural way to keep from overheating is to increase the heart rate and increase sweating. When these two natural body remedies do not suffice, the result can be a heat-related illness. As an employer, it is imperative to adopt a Heat-Related Illness Prevention Program if a heat-hazard is present. While the body will naturally fight the beginning stages of many heat-related illnesses, it is imperative to do everything you can as an employer to engineer out the potential for heat-stress. Some common engineering controls that can be used include the use of A/C, increase in ventilation, cooling fans, reflective-heat measures to block radiant heat, or providing shade for outside workers.

When engineering controls are not enough, it is time to use some possible administration controls to prevent your workforce from having heat-related illnesses. These include acclimation of workers starting their day off in the heat, re-acclimation after extended periods of being away from heat, adjusting schedules of workers to accommodate highs in heat, accommodating break and lunch schedules, limiting as much of the strenuous work as possible, and use of relief workers.

Once engineering and administrative controls have been implemented and it’s still determined that these steps do not suffice, you must look at providing PPE as a means of supplemental protection. Some common PPE that can help reduce heat-stress include water cooled garments, fire proximity suits, air-cooled garments, cooling vests, sun hats, light colored clothing, as well as sunscreen.

An effective heat-related illness prevention program should include a worker acclimatization program, heat alert program, and medical monitoring program. It should also include effective training that includes how to recognize heat-related illness symptoms, as well as what to do in the event of a heat-related emergency.

As with most safety topics, prevention and proactivity will be your best bet in mitigating the hazards associated with heat-stress. Be heat smart and know when the weather forecast calls for extreme temperatures. Get creative in accommodating these circumstances. Your workplace is relying on you to protect them from every preventable hazard. Heat- stress is a preventable occurrence that companies should always prepare for.

**Please Notify Us of Staff Changes.** Please take a moment to contact us to correct any staffing changes for your organization, including email addresses. Email us at info@archbright.com.

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We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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