

Employment Law Alert: Emergency Orders

Governor Issues Emergency Orders that Require Most MA Employers to Modify Business Operations

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On Sunday, March 15, 2020, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker announced emergency orders in response to the Coronavirus outbreak that directly affect Massachusetts employers.

Specifically, the Governor directed, in material part:

- A suspension of educational operations at all public and private elementary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth;
- A prohibition of gatherings of over 25 people, including, *but not limited to*, community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based events, sporting events with spectators, concerts, conventions, fundraisers, parades, fairs, festivals, and any similar event or activity that brings together 25 or more persons in a single room or single space. ***(This prohibition expressly prohibits gatherings of more than 25 people in open work spaces, such as conference rooms.)***

The Governor's emergency orders take effect on **Tuesday, March 17, 2020**, and are scheduled to remain in place through April 5, 2020, unless otherwise ordered.

The Governor has *not* ordered the general closure of private-sector employers in Massachusetts. However, taken together, *the effect* of the emergency orders requires most private-sector employers to significantly modify their business operations. ***Specifically, the orders require most employers to: limit access to co-working spaces; and transition employees to teleworking environments to accommodate childcare responsibilities.***

In anticipation of employment disruptions that will result from the emergency orders, the Governor also announced expanded unemployment insurance protections for Massachusetts workers impacted by Coronavirus-related work stoppages. In addition, the United States Congress is *now* considering an economic stimulus bill that may include certain paid leave benefits for employees who suffer medical conditions or periods of unemployment related to Coronavirus.

The Morse **Employment Law Team** is following this topic closely. Please contact us should you have any questions.

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