



Employment law and COVID-19 webinar recording

Yesterday's OVMA webinar on employment law as it pertains to COVID-19 attracted more than 400 participants. The webinar was recorded, so members who missed it or participants who wish to review it can [access the recording here](#). You can also [view the presentation slides](#) used by Joran Morelli and Tamara Ramsey from Dale & Lessmann, LLC.

During the webinar, Jordan and Tamara referenced a memorandum outlining things to consider to limit (to the extent possible) a practices' legal liability when considering laying off employees. That [memorandum can be found here](#). They also provided a [layoff notice template](#) that a practice can adapt if laying off an employee. **Important note:** Before using the template, please review the memorandum on layoffs and legal liability referenced above.

Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to answer all the questions that participants posed during the webinar. Members with employment-related questions that are particular to them (i.e. questions that relate to the wording of their employment contract) are encouraged to call OVMA's Free Legal Counsel Service at 1.877.636.8557 for assistance. Members with more general questions can send them to info@ovma.org, and OVMA will address those questions as quickly as possible. OVMA will also be establishing a Q&A page on employment issues as they pertain to COVID-19. That page will be made available tomorrow will be updated as new questions arise.

Guide to keeping your practice afloat financially during the pandemic

The webinar discussed a variety of issues veterinary practices are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, including potentially having to lay off employees in order to keep the practice financially viable. While forced layoffs may be part of the solution, there are a variety of other actions a practice can take to balance revenues during the pandemic, including:

- Reducing non-payroll expenses
- Implementing strategies to maintain revenue
- Taking advantage of the federal 10 per cent wage subsidy
- Enabling employees to take advantage of the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit
- Working with staff to agree on voluntary reductions in hours worked

OVMA has developed a simple [step-by-step guide](#) to help keep your practice afloat financially during the pandemic.

New federal assistance

The federal government has introduced new measures to assist both employers and workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of particular interest to members will be the [federal 10 per cent wage subsidy](#) and the new [Canadian Emergency Response Benefit](#). For details on each program, check out OVMA's [Guide to Keeping Your Practice Afloat](#).

New provincial assistance

On March 25, the provincial government passed Bill 188, the Economic and Fiscal Update Act 2020. It provides additional resources to support the health-care system and direct aid to individual and businesses, including:

- Doubling the Employer Health Tax (EHT) exemption.
- One-time payment for families of \$200 per child up to age 12 and \$250 per child with special needs.

Several municipalities are providing support by proposing property tax deferrals. Check with your local town hall to see if these are available in your area.

What happens if someone falls ill at the clinic?

A number of members have asked OVMA what they should do if a staff member presents ill with COVID-19 symptoms while at work. The Ministry of Health's Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Barbara Yaffe, provided the follow advice:

- The staff member who is ill must immediately report that they are unwell to their boss/supervisor.
- The clinic/office doesn't need to close, but remaining staff should sanitize all work spaces.
- The ill staff member is to immediately go home in a personal vehicle, not public transit.
- Once home, the ill staff member is to contact their primary care physician or telehealth Ontario to determine if COVID-19 testing is required.
- Should it be determined that the individual doesn't need to be tested for COVID-19, they are to remain at home until they are well.
- Should the individual be tested for COVID-19 and test positive, Public Health will notify the employer and provide next steps. A COVID-19 positive test does not automatically mean everyone in the clinic needs to self-isolate or is in jeopardy—it will all depend on the health practices and social distancing being done at the clinic. Public Health will evaluate and provide directives.

Dr. Yaffe also provided a reminder that influenza and the common cold are still affecting individuals, and not just COVID-19. Please note, as this situation evolves directives from the Ministry or Public Health could change.

Members who think they may have COVID-19 are encouraged to use [Ontario's Self-Assessment Tool](#).

OVMA COVID-19 survey #2

As the COVID-19 pandemic develops, OVMA would like to monitor and keep track of how different practices are approaching the current situation, as well as how this evolves over time. We believe it will be helpful for veterinarians to know what others in the profession are doing.

To that end, veterinarians in clinical practice are being surveyed at regular intervals, to ascertain this information. Results will be published in NewsHound. The survey will remain open for two days, closing Saturday, March 28. [Fill out the survey.](#)

Thank you for your participation!

Free well-being webinars

OVMA's Member Assistance Program has two free webinars available to help members during the COVID-19 outbreak:

[Emotional Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (25 minutes)

- Why outbreaks affect our emotional health?
- Practical skills to cope with the anxiety
- Talking to your children
- Tips for you and your family

[Talking to Your Child About COVID-19](#) (25 minutes)

- Having a difficult Conversation
- Where to start?
- The tough questions
- Create a solution focus



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