



## Managing a diverse workforce during the coronavirus pandemic: Practical guidelines

The Coronavirus presents unique challenges for workers from diverse groups in Israel, most notably women, Arabs, and Haredim (ultra-Orthodox Jews). These challenges have to do with the relationship between these and other groups, who embody diverse cultural characteristics and lived experiences.

It is thus especially important that, despite the pandemic, organizations that have undertaken a commitment to diversity and inclusion, find ways to introduce and integrate practices that embody this policy during their current operations to ensure that past efforts have not been in vain and that past gains are not eroded.

### Four ways in which managers can promote diversity and inclusion right now



#### Fairness about laying off and rehiring employees

Companies whose lay-off and rehiring decisions are made with the diversity of their workforce in mind, demonstrate that fairness is at the heart of their agenda. Hence, we recommend that organizations consider their mix of workers through the lens of workforce under-representation, in order that workers from under-represented population groups are not the first ones to be put on unpaid leave or laid off, and the last ones to be brought back or rehired.

#### What can be done?

- A Managerial decision: Adopt a policy that decisions related to lay-offs and rehiring express the organizational policy regarding the desired mix of workers and the organization's commitment to fair employment.
- Communicate that policy in a way that increases transparency of the process, supports a perception of fairness, and reduces uncertainty and anxiety.

#### Make sure to hear everyone's voice as you manage the new dynamics of remote and work-from-home realities

Working remotely changes the nature of organizational communication on every level: from the staffer – manager level, through the team level, and all the way to the level of the organization as a whole.

#### What can be done?

- Aim for inclusive dialogue during staff meetings: Invite everyone to speak up, which helps keep participants attentive.
- Involve workers in deciding on tasks, congruent with the workload that each of them can realistically undertake, given their current life circumstances.
- Create conditions that will enable workers to feel that they are being heard: Keep in touch with each worker consistently and often, and express interest in their circumstances, experiences and feelings.



## Leverage organizational discourse to support and increase a sense of belonging

A strong sense of belonging is crucial if people are to function well at work and stay positive. Workers from under-represented groups, however, often have a very tenuous sense of belonging to the organization to begin with, even at the best of times, and a crisis most likely reinforces that.

### What can be done?

- Stay in ongoing contact with all of your staff members – with those who are physically present at work, with those working from home, and with those on unpaid leave. Keep staff members up to date regarding company activity and express sincere interest in their situation.
- Emphasize the shared organizational identity - use inclusive language, like “we are all part of this effort / we are all worried.”
- Link the individual and the collective: Encourage staff members to share their personal experiences. At the same time, make it possible to share commonalities like worrying about elderly parents or grandparents, coping with social distancing, etc.

## Using organizational discourse to affirm and increase tolerance

Times of crisis tend to make discourse harsher; more stereotyped, hurtful, and generalized. In Israel, such discourse has thus far been aimed at the ultra-Orthodox. Its very presence, however, is harmful to everyone. Maintaining and promoting attitudes of tolerance, respect, and equality between different groups, requires more than simply being opposed to the use of stereotypes and avoiding racist discourse. Organizations must also continue to work systematically and consistently to advance diversity and inclusion.

### What can be done?

- In every way possible, oppose hate speech and discriminatory discourse.
- Emphasize that diversity is highly regarded by the organization, and continue efforts to maintain a mixed workforce.
- Avoid and discourage generalizations and encourage the awareness that during this period, negative stereotypes tend to be reinforced and can be hurtful to workers and applicants.

For more on these topics, please consult the complete guide on the aChord website at [https://achord.huji.ac.il/diverse\\_employment](https://achord.huji.ac.il/diverse_employment)  
You are also invited to join us for online and off-line workshops on employment diversity during the Coronavirus era, which are announced on our Facebook page.

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**aChord: Social Psychology for Social Change** focuses on developing and making accessible innovative academic knowledge in social psychology, with the aim of promoting more equal, tolerant, and respectful relations between the various social and ethnic groups in Israeli society, and between Israeli society and its neighbors.