NEO EMPLOYER CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE SURVEY REPORT

March 2020

ERC | 100

Making Workplaces Great for 100 Years.

TERMS OF USE

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ABOUT US

Founded in 1920, ERC is a human resource organization that makes workplaces great by providing training, HR consulting and support, coaching and assessments, and research services.

We're the creators and producers of NorthCoast 99, an annual awards program in its 22nd year that honors exceptional Northeast Ohio employers for top talent. ERC also sponsors the ERChealth insurance program in Ohio.

Hundreds of companies nationwide from a variety of industries turn to ERC every year for blended learning solutions to develop their managers, supervisors, leaders, and general workforce. Our training programs can be delivered at ERC, at your organization, and via webinar and e-learning platforms.

ERC is also a leading provider of HR consulting services that help organizations find and keep top talent and improve their people processes. These solutions include compensation and benefits consulting, HR project support, employee engagement surveys, coaching and assessments, and talent and performance management.

ERChealth was established in 1999 to offer affordable, quality health insurance to Ohio businesses with over 50 employees. Our plans are underwritten by Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield. We've saved over $200 million for our 40,000+ members by providing low premiums and zero percent to single-digit rate increases. On average, we maintain a 90% customer retention rate.

This survey was conducted as a service of ERChealth.

2020 NEO EMPLOYER CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE SURVEY REPORT

INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

This report summarizes the results of ERC's March 2020 survey on how Northeast Ohio employers are responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. Constituents of ERC were invited to participate in the survey on March 10, 2020 via email invitation and other online promotions. The survey was open for approximately two days, officially closing in the morning on March 12, 2020. ERC understands that this topic is rapidly evolving, and we will continue to provide updates to this line of research in the coming weeks.

The report that follows includes data on:

- NEO employer preparedness for a large-scale viral outbreak
- Policies and plans in place for a large-scale viral outbreak, as well as any recent changes
- Precautions taken by employers in response to COVID-19
- Requests made by employees in response to the outbreak

To provide the most reliable and accurate information, data was cleaned, and duplicate records were removed, as were outliers. Invalid data was also eliminated, yielding a total of 130 participants.

Qualitative data was analyzed according to commonality or major themes, and all quantitative data was analyzed using statistical software to ensure validity and reliability. Please note that all open-ended responses are reported exactly as submitted by participants. This includes not correcting for spelling and grammar, a practice that preserves the integrity of the original text.

This report shows several frequencies and response distributions. Frequencies of data responses may not total 100% exactly in some cases due to rounding of decimals or the ability for participants to select multiple response options.

EMPLOYER PREPAREDNESS

Employer Ranked Level of Preparedness

FIGURE 1 | In terms of current plans and policies, how do you rate your organization's level of preparedness for an epidemic/pandemic?
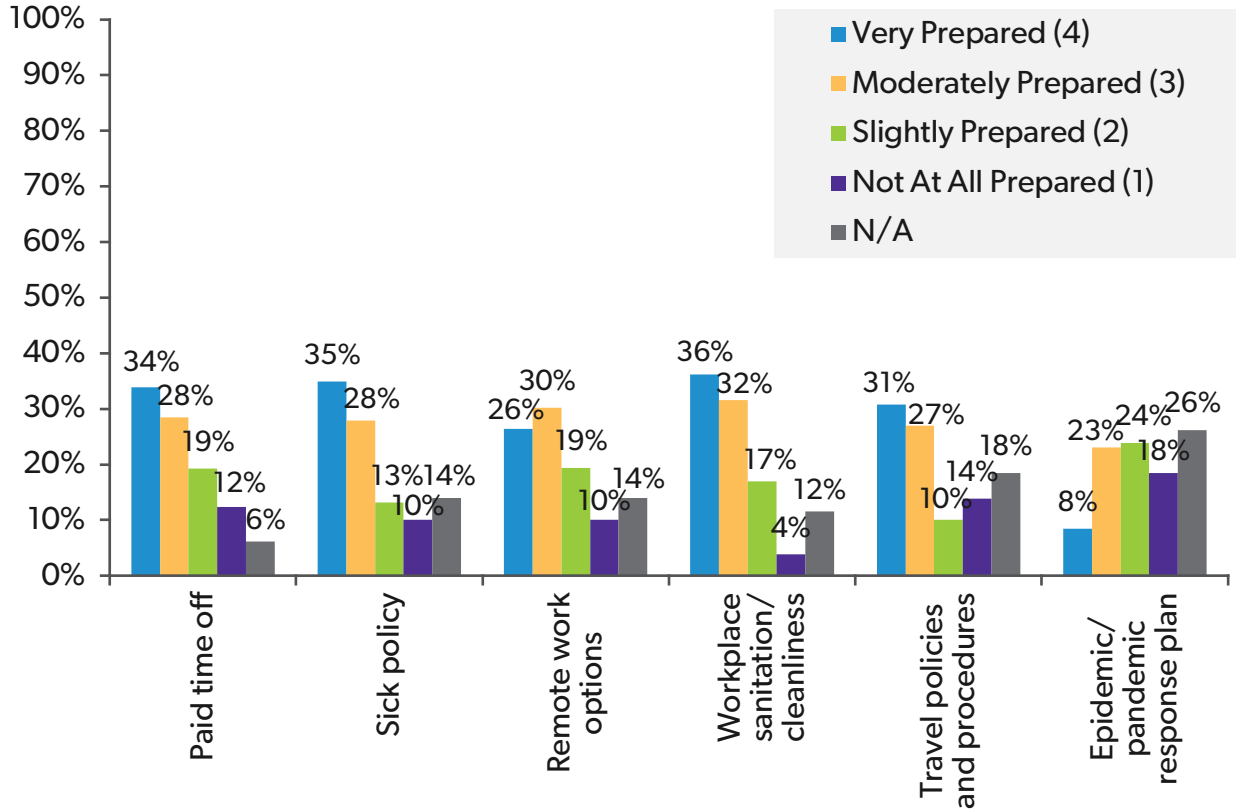
FIGURE 1a | Average level of preparedness of organization's current plans and policies for an epidemic/pandemic

Types of plans and policies	Average
Paid time off	2.90
Sick policy	3.02
Remote work options	2.85
Workplace sanitation cleanliness	3.13
Travel policies and procedures	2.92
Epidemic pandemic response plan	2.29

Ranking: *Very Prepared (4); Moderately Prepared (3); Slightly Prepared (2); Not At All Prepared (1)*

POLICIES, PLANS, & REVISIONS

Policies & Plans in Place

FIGURE 2 | Does your organization have any of the following large-scale viral outbreak plans or policies in place?
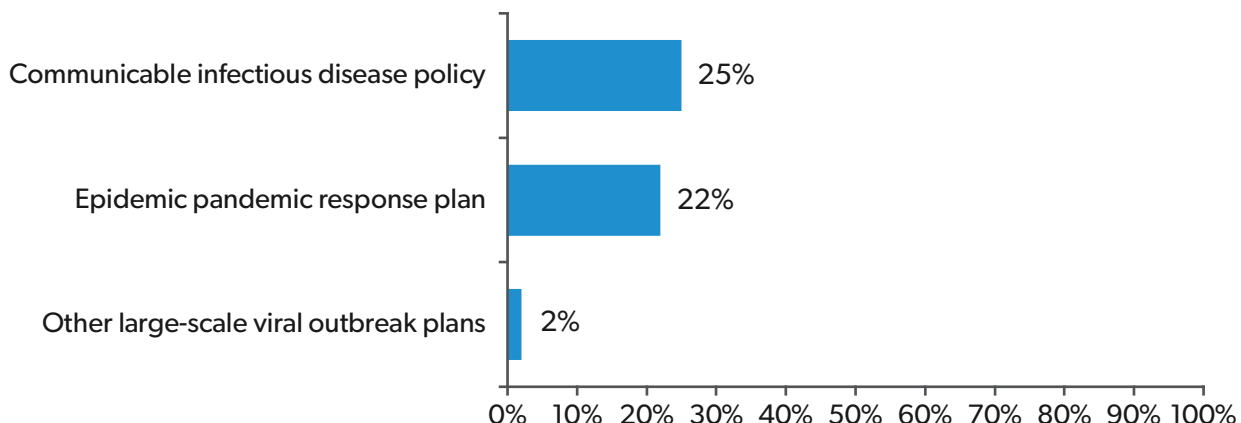
Additional Data Note: Among those organizations that indicated they have one of the above-mentioned policies or plans in place, the majority have already provided their managers/supervisors with training on how to implement the policy or plan. The remaining organizations that had not yet provided that training to managers/supervisors, indicated they planned to do so soon.

Revisions to Policies & Plans

FIGURE 3 | Has your organization revised any of its plans or policies in response to the COVID-19 outbreak?

- ■ Yes, we have already made revisions
- ■ Not yet, but we are planning to make revisions soon
- ■ No, and we have no plans to make revisions

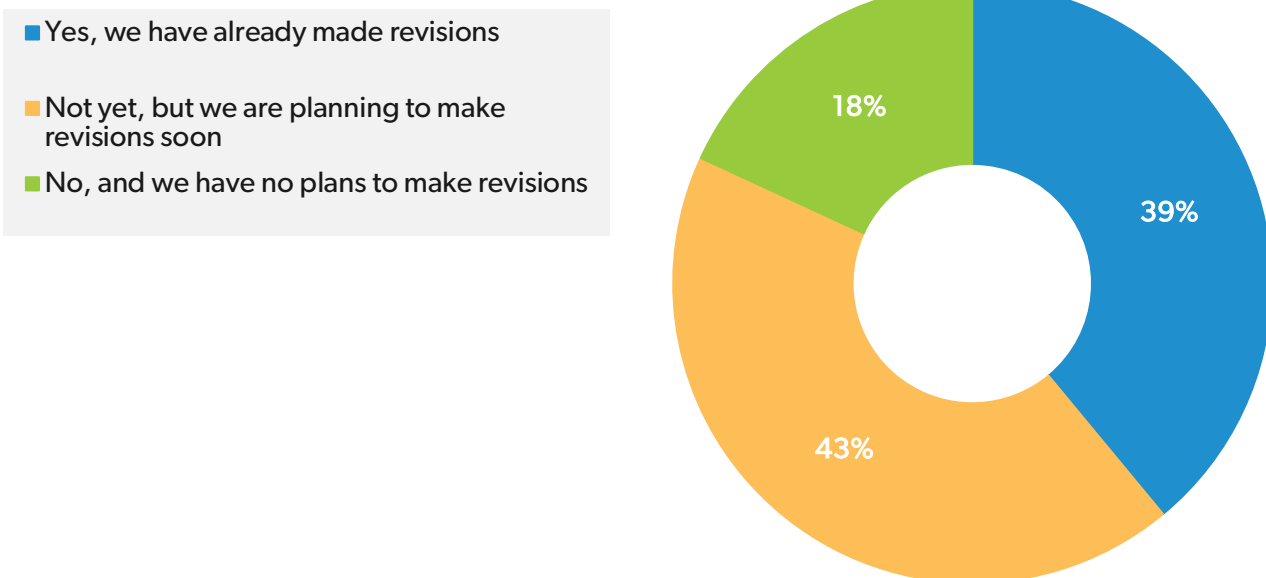**FIGURE 3a | Among organizations indicating they have already revised plans or policies in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the most commonly cited changes include:**

- Travel policies (e.g., using virtual options instead of traveling to locations)
- Updates to remote policies already in place (e.g., training on how to work remote)
- Sick policies
- Employee training on virus
- Following governor and/or CDC recommendations
- Screening visitors for exposure risk
- Group meeting policies

FIGURE 3b | Among organizations that have not yet, but plan to revise plans or policies soon, the most commonly anticipated changes include:

- Guidelines to leave workplace if symptoms arise and communicating with clients who show symptoms
- Changing procedures to minimize outside contact
- Relaxed attendance policies (exemptions from points systems)
- Do not need to use PTO or sent home with pay
- Extension of sick days
- Adding remote work options
- Doctor's note not required
- Possible temporary shutdown
- Increased attention to workplace sanitation and cleanliness
- Considering revisions to paid medical leave policy and/or STD

FIGURE 3c | Among organizations that have not, and do not plan to revise existing plans or policies, the most commonly cited reasons for not making changes include:

- Not ready to decide
- Manufacturing (hands-on is a must for certain workers)
- Low risk and high adaptability (commonly hear from smaller organizations)
- Remote friendly already
- Lack of flexibility in terms of workplace culture

Managing Pay

FIGURE 4 | Managing employee pay if paid time off is exhausted during the COVID-19 outbreak

Participants were asked:

"How would your organization handle pay if employees exhaust their paid time off (i.e. sick time PTO vacation etc.) during the COVID-19 outbreak?"

The most common responses to this open-ended question are summarized below:

- Many organizations: TBD, no one knows yet
- No pay (unpaid time off)
- FMLA
- STD
- Person by person evaluation
- PTO
- Allow them to borrow from 2021 bank or take additional days off without pay
- Extend sick pay
- Compensate employees at a reduced rate
- Full pay during leave required by physician
- Only if government provides
- Share PTO with other employees
- Pay partial salary during additional time off not covered by regular paid time off

Additional Data Note: Some organizations suggested in their response to this question that this particular situation was unlikely to arise due to the remote work options they would be able to offer to their employees even in prolonged isolation or quarantine.

PRECAUTIONS & REQUESTS

Employer Precautions

FIGURE 5 | Is your organization taking any of the following precautions in response to the COVID-19 outbreak?

Precaution	Percentage
Educating employees about minimizing the risk of disease transmission	77%
Reminders about or additional access to hand sanitizer, cleaning products, etc.	75%
Reminders or additional signage about proper hand washing personal hygiene	68%
Limiting work-related travel	51%
Establishing stricter policies about coming to work sick	46%
Limiting attendance at large, work-related gatherings (i.e., conferences, etc.)	38%
Using technology for virtual instead of face-to-face interactions	36%
Limiting outside visitors to the workplace	17%
Requesting that employees self-quarantine upon returning from personal travel	15%
Limiting group meetings internally	9%
Practicing or simulating your organization's large-scale viral outbreak response plan	5%
Limiting use of shared spaces in the workplace (i.e., lunch rooms, hoteling desks, conference rooms, etc.)	5%
Other preventative actions	1%

Additional Data Note: 94% of participating organizations cited taking at least one or more of the precautionary measures listed above in **FIGURE 5**.

FIGURE 5a | Details of employer precautions

Participants were asked to provide additional details around some of the precautions they are taking at their organizations. The most common responses received are summarized below.

Establishing stricter policies about coming to work sick
- Work from home
- If employee comes in sick – send home immediately

Limiting travel
- All employees allowed necessary travel (if it cannot be virtual)
- No conferences
- No international travel
- No travel to California or Seattle

Limiting attendance at large, work-related gatherings (i.e., conferences, etc.)
- If external event is cancelled, ours is canceled
- Not attending large events (no travel allowed)

Using technology for virtual instead of face-to-face interactions
- Teleconferencing
- Zoom
- WebEx
- Skype
- Microsoft team meetings
- Virtual training

Limiting outside visitors to the workplace
- Canceling appointments
- Only business necessary visitors
- Visitors must confirm if they have been in physical contact with a person from another country or had other exposure risks

Limiting group meetings internally
- Canceled
- Change to virtual, or postponed

Requesting that employees self-quarantine upon returning from personal travel
- Those who have traveled to hot spot areas
- All employees returning under 14 self-day quarantine

Employee Requests

FIGURE 6 | Have your employees made any of the following requests because of the COVID-19 outbreak?
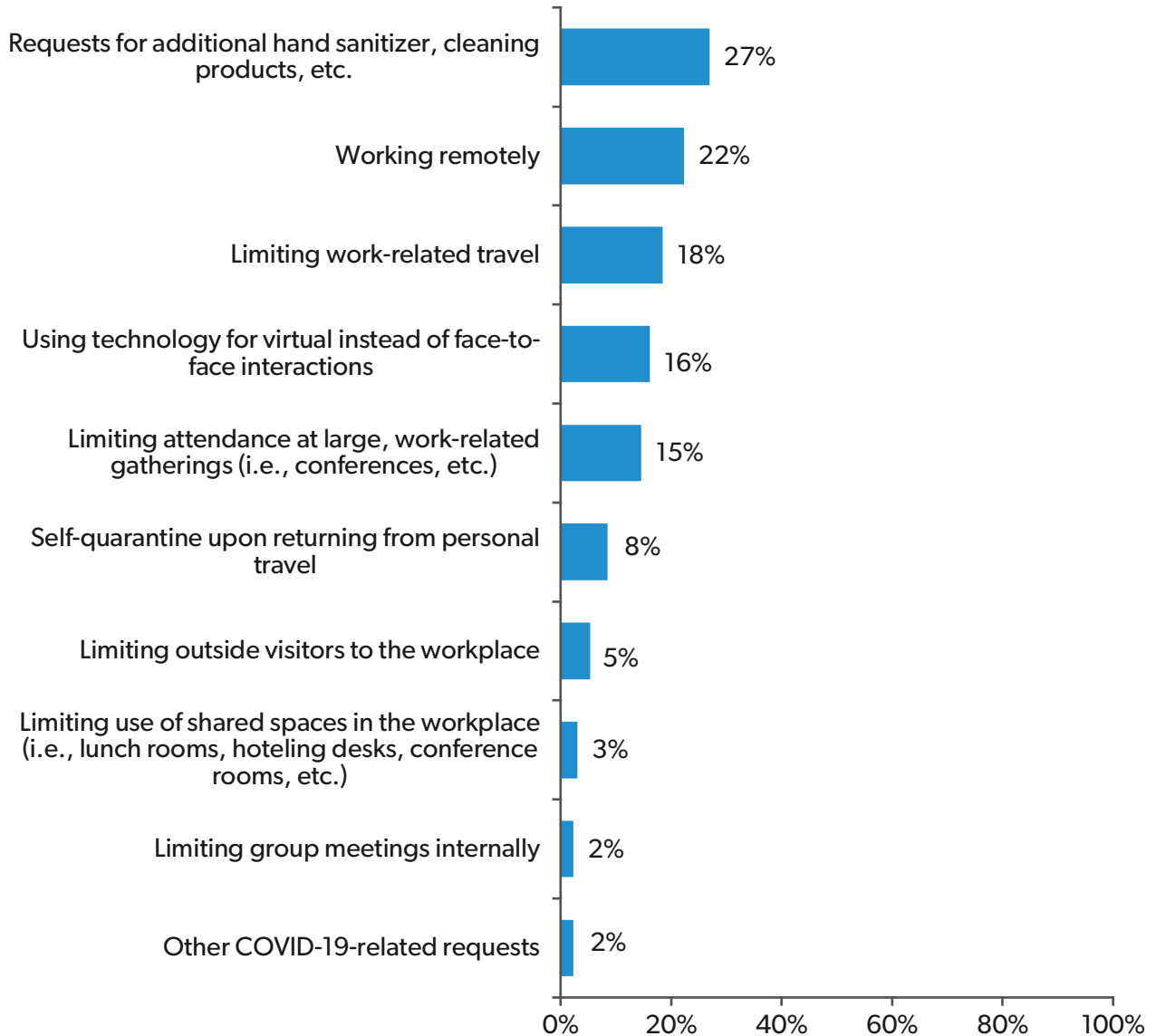
Other COVID-19-related requests cited: Lysol for work areas, associate reached out about preparedness plan, many of the above items do not apply due to the proactive nature of our communications and actions.

Additional Data Note: 49% of participating organizations cited receiving at least one or more of the requests from employees listed in **FIGURE 6**.

Virtual Work Options

FIGURE 7 | How is your organization handling virtual work options during the COVID-19 outbreak?
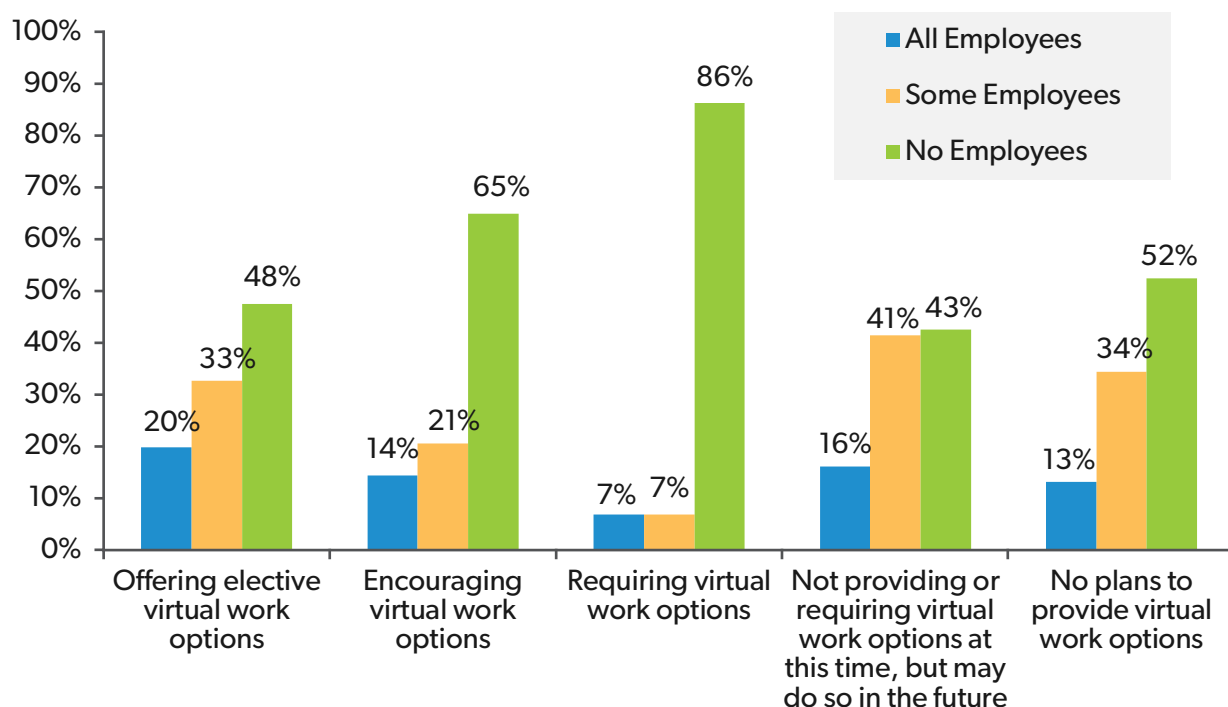

FIGURE 7a | Details of virtual work options being provided (or not)

Participants were asked to provide additional details around the types of employees that are being provided with virtual work options (or those that are not). The most common responses received are summarized below.

Offering elective virtual work options
Some employees

- Executives/directors only
- Managers only
- Office based positions
- Salaried employees
- TBD – based on primary work function

Encouraging virtual work options
Some employees

- Those with compromised immune systems
- Based on primary work function
- Non-essentials
- Exempt employees
- Those with meetings that require travel

Requiring virtual work options
Some employees

- Those who traveled to hot spots
- Office workers
- Sales associates continue to travel, but required to work from home in between travel

Not providing or requiring virtual work options at this time, but may do so in the future
Some employees

- Those that have a laptop and can conduct remote work
- Sick employees
- Managers
- Administrative employees
- Salaried employees

Continued from previous page:

Not providing or requiring virtual work options at this time, but may do so in the future
Some employees
- Office workers
- Based on primary work function
- Non-essentials

No plans to provide virtual work options
Some employees
- Not possible to work remotely (most common among medical organizations and manufacturers)
- No plans currently, capable of reacting quickly when necessary

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Other Actions Taken by Employers

FIGURE 8 | Additional employer responses to the COVID-19 outbreak

Participants were asked to share any additional information about how their organization is responding to the COVID-19 outbreak in their workplace.

The responses received to this open-ended question are summarized below:
- Focused on how to best service our clients (remote or otherwise)
  - Precautions for those organization that must provide an in-person service
  - Education to clients for those organizations in professional services in terms of the impact of COVID-10 on their industry specialization
- Plans to cover employee pay during a companywide shutdown
- Multiple daily meetings and communications – particularly among managerial staff
- Watching for updated guidance from CDC, local government and surrounding institutions
- Focused on sanitation at this time, extra cleaning, encouraging good hygiene, posted health reminders, etc.
- We have a checklist which is used for all planned visitors before they are permitted to enter the work areas. We have eliminated any unplanned visitors from entering the buildings
- Implementing social distancing tactics

DEMOGRAPHICS

In total, 130 Northeast Ohio employers participated in the survey. The breakdown of the industries and organizational sizes (by employee count) they represent are below.

FIGURE 9 | Industry & Organizational Size

	Percent
Industry	
Health and Human Services	5%
Hospitality/Entertainment/Media	3%
Manufacturing	41%
Nonprofit - Other	17%
Professional or Technical Services	23%
Wholesale/Distribution Trade	5%
Other	6%
Organizational Size	
1-50	25%
51-200	51%
201-500	13%
Over 500	12%

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