



## WORKPLACE OPTIONS' PREPAREDNESS FOR COVID-19

May 14, 2020

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Since the start of the global pandemic and the subsequent lockdown conditions the world has been living under, WPO has been inundated by requests to provide temporary, emotional crisis support. These have come from both existing clients whose EAPs had not yet rolled out to certain country locations and from those who were going through our implementation process but wanted a short-term measure to offer immediate support to staff and family members. But, the most frequent of these requests have come from organizations that had no employee assistance or wellbeing programs in place anywhere and realized that they now wanted to be proactive and set up support for staff around the world.

In place for between one and three months, these hotlines have continued to be used on a daily basis by employees and family members everywhere and have played a key part in the support and outreach offered by employers during this pandemic. We are extremely grateful for the outstanding commitment and hard work of our implementation teams who have worked tirelessly since the beginning of March to launch over 150 rapid response hotlines in more than 50 countries in record turnaround times of two to five days.

As many countries around the world started to implement the initial phases of the return from lockdown this week, WPO released its much-awaited pre-recorded discussion on Managing the Return to Work Process. Featuring business leaders

from WPO clients in China and Greater China, as well as an expert psychologist and a WPO consultant, the panel discusses the many social, psychological, behavioral, and practical lessons learned from the return to the workplace environment. We believe we have a great deal to learn from these experiences and adjustments as employers and their workers around the world begin their gradual return to their office locations. To further support our clients during this next phase of the global recovery process, we also, launched a pre-recorded webinar this week on Leading During a Crisis, which focuses on how managers can support their team during these times and the challenging transition from lockdown and homeworking.

As reported last week, WPO continues to refine its plans for the return to the

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workplace, ensuring that we have all the flexibility required to meet and comply with government guidance and directions in all countries where our offices are located. This flexibility will extend to adapting our technology, communications, and resourcing plans to ensure our staff feel totally comfortable and safe in their eventual return to our offices and service centers.

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Although for the last eight weeks WPO has been dedicating 100 percent of its communication, marketing, and content-production resources to offering COVID-19 support, we felt it important this week to separately recognize the upcoming International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia on May 17. This day was created in 2004 to draw attention to the violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people, and all other people with

diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and commemorates the World Health Organization's decision in 1990 to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder. WPO stands firm beside and ready as always to support the LGBTI community, who are more likely to be subjected to criminal acts of violence and abuse, with many in different parts of the world still suffering great physical and psychological distress as a result of living with a heightened risk of imminent verbal, physical, and sexual violence.

WPO is proud to be playing a major part in the response to the global employee assistance and wellness community in supporting the emotional and practical needs of employees and their family members all over the world during these truly exceptional times. WPO will still be there when the crisis is over, continuing to support our 65 million members as they face the challenge of life after lockdown and the "new normal." And we are there for clients and partners as they begin to face difficult and uncertain economic times created by the pandemic.

We wish you and yours the very best of health.

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**Alan King**  
President and Chief Executive Officer