

# COVID-19 CONSULTANTS GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS TO GET EMPLOYEES BACK TO WORK SAFELY



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This article was medically reviewed by [Dr. Edward McManus](#).

For over two years, COVID-19 has upended businesses and workplace dynamics across all types of organizations, including corporations, agencies, schools, healthcare facilities, and more. For the first time in our lives, we experienced a sea change in the way we worked, communicated, and navigated a situation that was beyond anyone's control – including business leaders who were used to determining how they operate.

Fast forward to Spring 2022. The world has transformed yet again. Today we are learning to live with COVID-19 and the ever-changing wave of new variants, evolving CDC guidelines, workplace requirements, employee concerns, and travel protocols. And with this change comes uncertainty and a need for trusted advice and timely information. Especially since many organizations are determining how they and their employees will function in today's *new normal* – which can be different for each company based on their unique goals, challenges, size, structure, and culture.

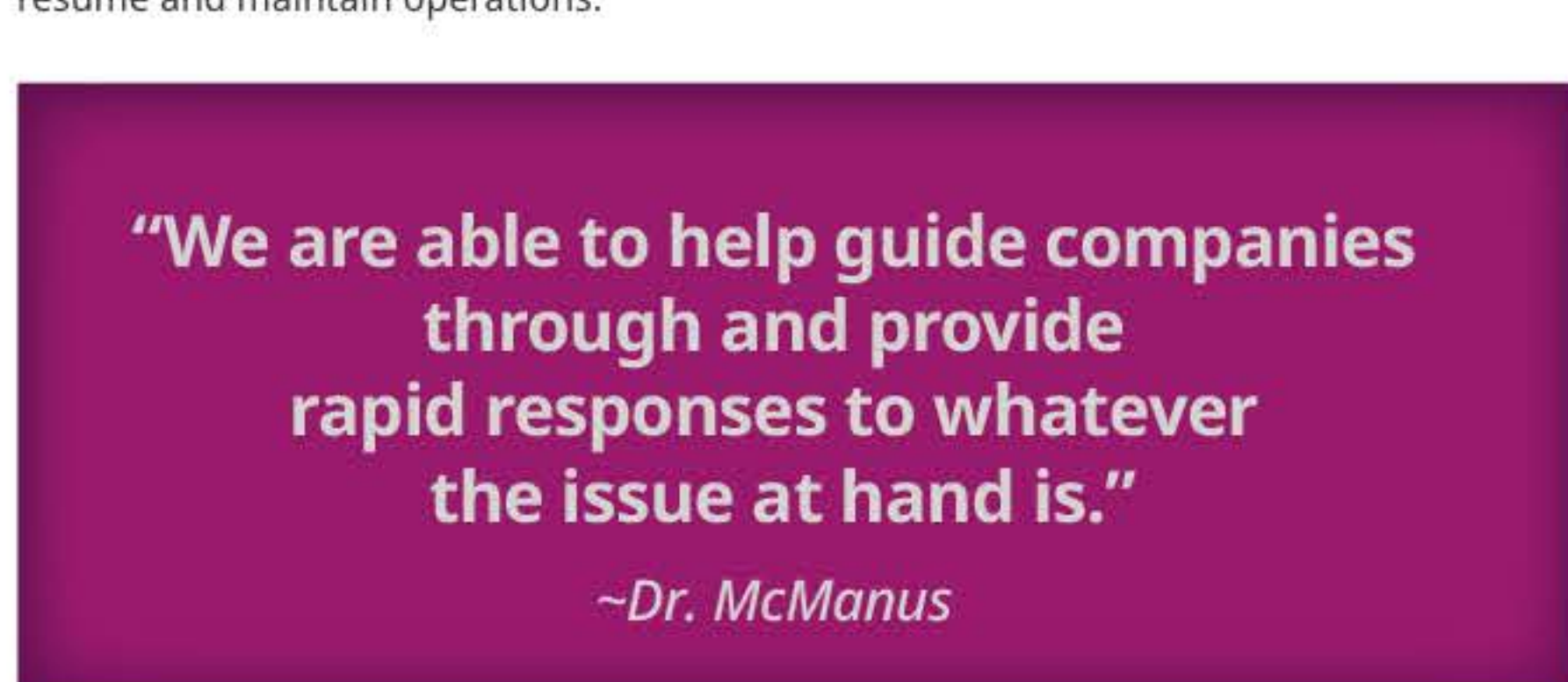
Creating and maintaining a safe workplace environment requires expert medical guidance and clinical expertise. And COVID-19 consultants – like the expert infectious disease physicians at [ID Care](#) – are most equipped to help organizations reopen their offices, bring employees back safely, establish health protocols, and more. Ensuring a COVID complaint workspace for employees now, and planning for a post-COVID workplace that ensures a safe and healthy environment for all, is on the minds of most company leaders. Additionally, varied federal, NJ state, and local guidelines make it even more difficult to navigate and implement COVID-19 workplace policies and health safety procedures that are easy to follow.

And rather lengthy and vague CDC business guidelines compound the need for sound medical advice and safety consulting. As infection control and prevention specialists, as well as experienced infectious disease physicians that have been on the front lines of COVID-19, ID Care is uniquely equipped to consult with all types of businesses and organizations on how to bring back their workforces safely and move forward. In this article, [Dr. McManus](#), a seasoned COVID-19 consultant who works with many New Jersey organizations, provides his perspective on how to create and maintain a healthy workplace in 2022.

## The Vital Role of a COVID-19 Consultant in Guiding Your Organization

As with any specialized consultant – whether legal, management, or financial – they play a special role in understanding your unique challenges, creating solutions, providing expert guidance, navigating business issues, and delivering hands-on services. The same is true for COVID-19 consultants who are called upon to provide much needed clinically based, medically-informed advice, expert education, customized solutions, and answers to unforeseen issues for their NJ corporate and organizational clients navigating COVID-19's many challenges – so they can make informed and confident business decisions.

This includes bringing employees back to work, opening cafeterias, hosting events, resuming international travel, and more. This all centers on the health and safety of an organization's team which is what a COVID-19 consultant focuses on. And many decisions are guided by what's happening locally and associated guidelines, which are constantly changing, so you need experts that know the latest COVID-19 research, information, and protocols that can impact how you resume and maintain operations.



According to Dr. McManus, organizations he works with want direct access to experts who can answer their questions in a reliable, accurate, and timely way as things are constantly shifting. He goes on to say, "We could give recommendations that are current now, and they could be changed by a whole host of regulatory agencies, ranging from state Health Departments, the Governor's Office, legislation, OSHA, as well as directives that come down from corporate centers that may not have a finger on the pulse of what the regional issues are. And there are so many one-offs that are not addressed in any of these directives or guidelines that need some interpretation, and we are able to help guide these companies through and provide rapid responses to whatever the issue at hand is."

## COVID-19 Consultants that are Infectious Disease Specialists Better Assist Your Business

If you think of it, consultants are very specialized, so they add value to whoever they are working with. What better way to ensure the health and safety of your workforce and leadership team than to turn to experts that have been on the front lines at over 135 NJ healthcare facilities treating COVID-19 patients, determining infection prevention and control guidelines, and developing the latest guidelines for returning communities to their everyday lives.

**When your company is engaging with COVID-19 consultants, consider these 5 requirements:**

- They should be *board-certified infectious disease doctors* as they are COVID specialists
- Infectious disease experts *touch every field of medicine including public health*, so the guidance they provide is reliable and actionable
- They should have *proven expertise with complex infection prevention and control* as your workplace depends on it
- They should have the *knowledge and resources to answer the "what ifs"* that usually come up unexpectedly or at inopportune times
- They should be *accessible and act as an expert guide and advisor*, and if they can't address something, they will help you find out who can!

As Dr. McManus reinforced, "We don't really think of ourselves as being limited to just addressing infections. We're really an organization that can be a solution for all sorts of issues that touch on medicine and how to address challenges that organizations may face now. In our consultant role, we hope that you think of us with any kind of problem you might have and if we're not the answer, we know who to turn to for the right solution".

## COVID-19 Consulting Can Benefit Many Types of Organizations and Facilities

Even with the COVID pandemic in a more even state, many types of organizations and facilities can benefit from COVID-19 consulting – whether it's safety consulting, health planning consulting, infection control consulting, or any other worker safety and workplace consulting services required. Practices like ID Care provide advisory services and well as in-person consulting to address the unique situations of each client they work with. When engaged as a concierge service for companies and facilities, clients always have access to the ID Care experts, ensuring that issues are resolved for optimal business impact.

**Some of the organizations that benefit COVID-19 consultants as part of their team include:**

- Large corporations, pharma companies, independent businesses
- Schools, college, and other educational facilities
- Hospitals, Long-term care, rehabilitation facilities, health care groups
- Government agencies and associations

Dr. McManus explained, "The obvious ones we consult with are New Jersey hospitals, health care groups, and long-term care facilities. But we're also very involved in schools and education and exalting that role. Today we consult with many larger corporations, pharma companies, as well as other consultant and attorney groups as a resource to answer many of their workplace health and safety questions".

He added, "In today's complex world, there's probably nothing more valuable for any organization to be able to say 'okay' – we have an expert we can reach out to and get their input and interact with, no matter what part of the organization may be frustrated or trying to deal with some of the challenges they face".

## Top 5 Ways a COVID Consulting Team Can Help Your Organization

Engaging the help of experts is important when faced with challenges that are outside of your normal business control or organizational comfort zone. This is especially true with the challenges COVID-19 presents – even when on the decline – as staff resumes coming to the office, in-person meetings ramp up, events are on the horizon, and travel is planned. It is important to consider the capabilities of your COVID-19 consulting partner and ensure they can help in the following ways:

- **Comprehensive:** should be a "one-stop" resource to cover all aspects of what may occur
- **Customized:** able to develop unique protocols and services based on your organization
- **Ability:** have the expertise to educate and train your team so they can be self-standing
- **Available:** always accessible and reachable as situations occur when you least expect
- **Interpret and Set Guidelines:** can translate confusing and ever-changing government guidelines into layman's terms as well as establish organization-specific ones that can be easily followed to ensure workplace safety now and going forward

Dr. McManus reinforced, "ID Care consultants are very good at customizing our service to what your needs are. We're more interested in saying 'well, what problem do you want us to address' as opposed to 'here's the product we provide, and you fit yourself into what we do'."

## The Process for Engaging and Working with a COVID-19 Consultant

The process for engaging a COVID-19 consultant with extensive medical and clinical expertise, like the [partners at ID Care](#), is quite simple. The first step is a screening consultation, which can be done virtually or in-person, depending on the specific organization. This is to determine the fit and what the organization is looking to achieve. Once engaged, there is not a one-size-fits all approach, as each company has its own unique needs and goals.

Many consultants, like those at ID Care, prefer to work on a retainer basis, so there is open access to the experts 24/7, where and when their guidance is needed. This approach is akin to a concierge engagement, as Dr. McManus reinforces that responsiveness and access to our specialists is key as things change frequently with COVID-19, and this impacts organizational plans and decisions.

Dr. McManus stated, "I think it's really about responsiveness being the greatest need. And when we get a call for assistance, it's typically because you don't know who to call; and that's really the sweet spot of where the need is. But once we are engaged, all they need to do is call us to get the help they need."

## What are the Services ID Care Offers for COVID-19 Consulting with Organizations

The physicians at ID Care are used to working with executives and leadership teams to solve business and organizational health and safety challenges. So there truly a customized approach to what they do for each client.

The following offers some insight into the types of consulting services available:

- **Regulatory requirements** (pertaining to kitchen prep, environmental cleaning, etc.)
- **Policies and procedures** (analysis, input, and structure around procedures to follow)
- **Cost savings** (evaluation of options to ensure cost effective, safe solutions)
- **Staff education** (key information and training to enable teams to operate safely)
- **Infection prevention and control** (essential protocols to ensure workplace health)
- **COVID-19 protocols** (related to masking, testing, travel, events, exposure, etc.)
- **Travel medicine** (travel guidance and risk assessment for global travel)

Additionally, what is **not on this list is advising on unplanned, unforeseen, unusual, and one-off circumstances** that arise, requiring sound input and solutions for organizations that count on ID Care.

Dr. McManus reinforced, "Having a relationship with us is also a vital access point for things you may not be able to recognize, like 'who's the specialist for this? Who should I contact?'. We're also very adept at handling a situation where 'Well, this is not exactly what we do but we know who does do this and where to access this specialty or information'."

Additionally, ID Care emphasized that it's important that they are a resource for a company that is reopening in terms of being a neutral party to speak to, and for their employees to be able to reach out to about what's safe or what's not safe. This also shows staff that they are valued.

Examples of their role have included guiding a large corporation on how to clean the workplace environment, including what's mandated versus considering what would make their team feel safe and protected, even if not scientifically required. Or when a company was considering a \$25,000 investment for a special air exhaust sterilization device that claimed to kill bacteria; but ID Care recommended against it based on their evaluation, saving the company significant dollars. And a school system that had employees requesting modifications at work and had to determine the best approach, based on science. Net, every organization's need is different but ID Care's ability to provide timely, customized solutions is common to all.

## Top 5 Thing to Remember as Organizations Bring Employees Back to Work

There is no cookie cutter answer to how organizations should function in today's new normal, but there are key things to remember as teams come together and workplaces' resume more usual activities.

- **Provide access to independent expertise** for counsel and so employees feel protected
- **Be mindful of workspaces** and how close people work together, and associated risks
- **Create a safe environment** where people feel comfortable wearing masks if they choose
- **Be open to virtual meetings**, events, and work, where possible
- **Consider meal preparation**, common eating areas, and food at events
- **Encourage personal responsibility for vaccination** as it protects others too
- **Provide access to testing** to make it easy for staff to rapid test or get tested
- **Know that policies are fluid**, as COVID-19 changes so must your organization's response

Organizations also must keep in mind that today the CDC offers very generic federal guidelines and New Jersey state policies are vague at best. So COVID consultants like those at ID Care help navigate and interpret policies and are part of the process to help create customized organization-specific procedures and recommendations that help teams move forward.

As Dr. McManus has uncovered through years of consulting for healthcare organizations in addition to companies through the COVID-19 pandemic, what makes a workplace compliant or safe is access to knowledge. And knowledge is expertise, what consultants like ID Care offer their clients. Additionally, value comes from things that don't occur, like mitigating crisis as many things are addressed and thought about upfront. This is harder to quantify, but clearly a top priority for every organizational leader.

## ID Care as Partner and Consultant for Organizations Today

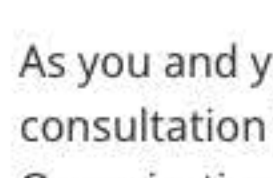
Throughout this pandemic, the team at ID Care has been an advisor to many businesses and organizations as well as a provider of clinical care to thousands of individuals who contracted COVID-19. Even as the rates of COVID-19 decline in New Jersey, COVID will remain with us, and new variants and health situations will arise. Having experts to turn to in these challenging times is essential for any company or facility. The health and safety of your leadership, employees, and customers is always at the forefront of everything ID Care does with and for your team.

As the largest infectious disease practice in New Jersey and on the East Coast, we are skilled at working with leadership and executive teams to provide concierge services you can count on, when and where you need them. The ID Care team is comprised of over 50 specialists who know how to provide up to date, medically informed consulting advice and hands-on solutions that meet your needs. Each member of the practice is passionate about solving problems –exploring them and thinking out of the box to develop the right solutions to help move your business and teams forward.

As Dr. McManus reinforced, "We see a glaring need for our expertise everywhere we look because we're not just about managing and addressing infections. Our real expertise is explaining what's going on. And the other thing is really thinking about preventing infections. And that's sort of where I think our sweet spot of expertise and care is."

As you and your colleagues embrace today's new normal, reach out to us for a COVID-19 consultation for your organization at call [908-281-0221](#) or visit [IDCare.com](#) to complete an Organization Consultation form.

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