

Law Society Advisory on Phase Two of Safe Re-Opening

The Government has announced that the country will be moving into Phase Two of Re-Opening starting this Friday, 19 June 2020. During Phase Two (as is the case currently in Phase One), law firms are at liberty to resume business operations without applying for a General or a Time-Limited Exemption as legal services fall under "[Permitted Services](#)". We have prepared a list of FAQs via the [President's May Message](#) as a navigable guide for all.

Singapore has made valuable gains through our collective (including the legal profession's), intentional sacrifices (even economically) during the Circuit-Breaker period to substantially reduce community transmission numbers. We need to ensure that we do not lose gains or lose ground in the combat against COVID-19 by risking a new spike by courting at-risk behaviour. We advise members, as responsible members of the community, to adhere to the spirit of Phase Two with a circumspect and cautious re-opening by taking note of the following:

1. Employers should ensure that employees whose functions can be done remotely (e.g. by telecommuting) continue to do so. There is no change in this aspect between Phase One and Phase Two. Members should continue working from home ("**WFH**") or telecommute unless unfeasible. As we discern from the policymakers' statements, WFH is not yet a flexible tool at the hands of the employers; it is still a default rule.
2. If telecommuting is unfeasible, larger employers should split their employees into teams (Team A/Team B segregation) while working in office ("**WIO**"). There should be no cross-deployment or interaction between employees in different teams or worksites, even outside of work. This will obviously minimise the risk of cross-contamination in the event of new case(s) within the firm and is a prudent measure from a BCP perspective.
3. While WIO, all employers and employees must continue to adhere to the [Safe Management Measures](#) at all times [as illustrations, (1) keep a safe distance of at least 1 metre between persons at all times; (2) avoid congregating employees at all common spaces; and (3) stagger working and break hours]. We understand that strict checks will be conducted by the authorities. Businesses that do not provide a safe workplace for workers will be asked to close their workplace.
4. Law firms are required to submit the number of workers who are WIO using the [GoBusiness portal](#) within two weeks of the date of resumption of operations.

Please refer to the following links for the latest government advisories regarding

Phase

Two:

1. [Moving into Phase Two of Re-Opening by Ministry of Health](#), 15 June 2020. Please take note of paragraph 9 that specifically underscores that in the interest of reducing physical contact between individuals, telecommuting must remain the default for all businesses where feasible .
2. [FAQs on Working From Home by GoBusiness](#)

Three final points to note:

- (a) Law firms and members are encouraged to check out our regularly updated [COVID-19 Resources webpage](#) that contains government advisories as well as practical tips and advice on working from home. Law firms can also tap onto [Tech-celerate for Law](#) as well as [other Government Support Schemes](#) to reduce the costs of implementing work-from-home arrangements.
- (b) In particular, law firms may wish to tap into the [Work-Life Grant](#) (the “**Grant**”) which provides funding support to companies to implement and sustain the use of Flexible Work Arrangements (“**FWA**”). The Grant will support FWAs such as flexi-load (e.g. part-time work and job sharing arrangements) and flexi-time (e.g. compressed work week). Eligible law practices can receive funding support of up to \$70,000 per law practice for local employees, over two years.
- (c) Given the potentially dynamic and evolving nature of Phase Two, we will closely monitor the developments and make further announcements from time to time should the need arises.

Please contact our Membership Department at e-mail membership@lawsoc.org.sg for assistance or queries.

Please do continue to stay wise and well during Phase Two.

Gregory Vijayendran, SC
For COVID-19 Task Force