

# Can You Ban Employee Travel During COVID-19? – Ask the Expert



You can't keep employees from defying COVID travel guidelines, but you needn't pay them if they have to go into self-isolation as a result.

## QUESTION

Can we ban employees from travelling outside the province to visit their family?

## ANSWER

No, but you can strongly discourage them from doing so.

## EXPLANATION

Your first duty is to follow current local public health guidelines, which in most jurisdictions ban travel outside the province (subject to local travel bubbles) except for essential purposes. That means you shouldn't **require** any of your employees to travel outside your province unless it's essential.

Employees are also required to obey the guidelines, including the ban on non-essential travel. However, most jurisdictions treat family visits as being essential when a family member is dying, in need of immediate care and other emergency situations. If that's the case with your own employees, you can't stand in their way. If, however, the visit isn't essential, you can strongly urge them not to go; however, you can't ban them from doing so.

You also may have leverage in addition to just being their employer. Make sure your employees understand that they'll have to self-isolate for 14 days when they return. And while you can't fire or discipline them for missing time, you also don't have to pay them for their time in self-isolation. At least, that's the rule under current employment standards laws. Employees may be entitled to pay if they belong to a union or you voluntarily provide paid COVID leave for self-isolation even though the ESA laws don't require you to do so.