

Covid Safe Staffing for Luxury Homes

How are high net worth (HNW) private staff employers getting the personal and household services needed and keeping themselves safe?

Private Staff Group is sharing best practices for high net worth employers of Private and Domestic Staff in the Covid stay-safe environment to receive services for your dynamic homes and lifestyle.

Employing private staff services for your home and personal needs can be effective if observations, safety measures, mutual respect and new techniques are all part of the new mix of management and employment practices. Accommodating transitions, changing situations including travel, new Covid information and being kind and caring to your staff enhances the results and experience for all.

Key best practices include:

- Proper, timely and responsive safety protocols- gloves and masks
- Social distancing—and avoid micro-managing
- Re-defined responsibilities
- Provide a flexible schedule to reduce stress and commute at low travel times
- Compensation changes to reward staff commitment to you
- Live-in, if possible and practical

Before going into safety protocol orientation mode with your household staff, the best thing to do is to find time to talk to them about everything that's happening outside, and ask how you can help them and their families. Your staff may not necessarily have all the information they need, so it is your responsibility to keep them up to speed about what is going on with the profound changes and risks in our environment.

Find out how they're feeling both physically and emotionally, so you can act on whatever needs to be addressed right away. Some helpful tips for extending help and guidance to your staff are as follows:

- Encourage them to eat properly, and allow them to get their share of nutritious food and vitamins
- Review work schedules to specify to allow for rest and proper sleep
- Consider Covid testing—do you have a concierge doctor?
- More frequent communication check-ins
- If you are able, extend an advance of their salary so they can also address their needs;
- Supply them with protective face masks, alcohol, sanitizer, work uniforms, and soap for washing;
- Explain how to practice proper social distancing.

Challenges in organizing many responsibilities includes thinking through the out-of-home encounters such as the need to still step out of the house for important errands like heading to the grocery, the drug store, supplies, etc.. Whether your designated errand runner is your household helper or yourself, it's important to be in sync about the proper safety protocols to observe.

If you are relocating to another residence, you have a decision to either bring staff with you or hire locally.

Practical safety includes:

Live in vs. Live out

Agreement on procedures with disinfectants

Changing of clothing when entering and leaving home.

Select rooms where work is allowed?

New staff quarantine for two weeks before starting work

Establish protocols for individuals entering your home

Interviewing new private staff candidates:

Engage private staff recruitment companies to select best fit candidates

Interviews through video calls- Zoom, Facetime, etc.

Questions: how long have you been symptom-free? Have you already had Covid-19? Have you tested positive for the antibodies?

If there is an option for Live-in, discuss the arrangements and safeguards

Discuss extra duties during the time of virus risk

How will your staff service needs change post- Covid?

Domestic workers—home care aides, housekeepers, estate and house managers, nannies and others who work in private homes—have experienced employment changes - ranging from termination, to furlough and hopefully, being embraced for their value with comprehensive employment and safety procedures as valued members of your team.

Clients of the Private Staff Group are at the nexus of money, power and culture.

Because of their wide circle of friends, business associates, working/living in remote locations- safe practices and organization is critical.

The majority of our clients are in places where they feel relatively safe. Whether in the Hamptons, Nantucket, Florida, Aspen, etc. – all precautions and protections need to be adhered with neighbors, in town and with private staff.

One hedge fund billionaire is at his ranch in Texas; another is isolating from other family members on a compound in Martha's Vineyard; a couple is in a villa in Bahamas; yachts are popular ... and so on.

Wherever you may decide to relocate during this time of fear in the urban centers, it's important to coordinate with your medical advisors about the health care expertise and make a plan for both your family and staff for access to care. Covid has increasingly spread to western and southern states, some of the desired locations for isolated living.

There are also those who have stayed in urban centers but who've managed to maintain a positive existence: one Private Staff Group client set up a trampoline in the large living room of their Tribeca apartment. Others are quarantining with their nannies, chefs and housekeepers. At home, they can replicate expensive

dinners out because upscale restaurants are still delivering (with fine wines, of course).

Our working clients have telecommute-able jobs, including workday interruptions from kids, pets and spouses are now the norm. It's still charming, *sometimes*: One in-demand finance executive reported that during a recent video conference, a client suddenly bellowed, "Don't you do that!" stunning other participants until he explained he was talking to his dog. At-home work productivity means setting up terms and rules to ensure privacy and a robust internet.

If your staff is reduced, dividing duties and timing is important.

"I hate" housework. "The endless cooking/cleaning loop kills your soul," a professional mom who decamps to the East End every summer told me. A week later, she let me know her family was in the guesthouse while her mask-outfitted housekeeper cleaned the bathrooms and floors. For very different reasons, all parties deemed it worth the risk.

"I guess I am going to have to relearn how to change sheets," a woman who lives in a storied building uptown told her adult daughter. Later the daughter reported that her father and mother were changing the sheets *together*. Of course, kids can be part of your house cleaning team.

Whether you are hunkered in your bunker, at the beach in the Hamptons, or staying in your main home in Greenwich, thinking through your options, researching best safe practices and extending your plans and rules to your household and personal staff will result in a healthy and happy exit from this time of invisible risks.

For further information and a discussion of employing private staff safely, please call Stephen Candland at Private Staff Group 203-856-7811 or email: stephen@privatestaffgroup.com.