



Office of Congressional Workplace Rights

Advancing workplace rights, safety & health, and accessibility in the legislative branch...

Restoration of Operations Guidance

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#) have released interim guidance to help advise workplaces that are preparing to reopen. The CDC guidance is to help prevent exposures to COVID-19 in non-health care settings (separate guidance is available for [health care settings](#)). The OSHA guidance describes how to prepare workplaces for COVID-19 and has separate guidance for protecting employees with a high or very high exposure risk.

It is necessary to collaborate with employees and unions to effectively communicate important COVID-19 information and planned changes and to seek their input.

It is critical to note that older adults (age 65 years or older) and people who have severe underlying medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes, seem to be at higher risk for developing serious complications from COVID-19 illness. Employees at higher risk for severe illness should be encouraged to self-identify, and employing offices should avoid making unnecessary medical inquiries.

Employing offices should take action to reduce their workers risk of exposure to COVID-19, while making sure to be compliant with relevant Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) regulations.

While the guidance offered below applies to most workplaces, specific industries may require additional safety precautions (such as health care/child care). The CDC notes: *“This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)... There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other characteristics of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing... The CDC will update this interim guidance as additional information becomes available”* (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>). OSHA has also updated its guidance as more information has become known about the virus.



The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Cloth face coverings may slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. The CDC notes: *“A cloth face covering may not protect the wearer, but it may keep the wearer from spreading the virus to others”* (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>).

What to Consider when Reopening your Workplace

The CDC recommends that workplaces should not reopen unless they can answer “Yes” to these 2 questions:

1. *Are you in a community that no longer requires significant mitigation (or restricting operations to designated essential critical workers)?*
2. *Do you have protective measures for employees at higher risk (for example, teleworking, tasks that minimize contact)?*

Determine Which Employees Return First

Evaluate your essential functions and the dependence that your clients have on your services. Start by determining which employees should return first based on business needs and the ability to follow proper safety protocols like social distancing.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

A list of products that are approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the [EPA website](#). Additionally, diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions prior to use.

(Photo source:
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6916e1.htm>)



Implement a Social Distancing Protocol

To help reduce the number of employees on site, you will likely have to make changes to your workplace and work shifts or even begin alternating workdays.

In-Person Meetings and Conferences

Initially after reopening, conduct virtual meetings as much as possible. If in-person meetings are necessary, they should follow social distancing requirements. The CDC recommends cleaning and sanitizing meeting spaces between meetings and during the workday.

Resuming Business Travel

Carefully consider your travel policies. The CDC encourages employers to coordinate with state and local health officials to obtain up-to-date information to determine appropriate responses.

Implementation of Workplace Controls to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

The information listed below presents examples of various controls to implement in your workplace. The most effective controls are those that rely on engineering solutions, followed by administrative controls, then personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE is the least effective control method and the most difficult to implement. When deciding how to implement controls in the workplace, employing offices may need to refer to the [Occupational Risk Pyramid for COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/occupational-safety-and-health/occupational-risk-pyramid-for-covid-19) provided by OSHA. Most employees will likely fall in the lower exposure risk (caution) or medium exposure risk levels. Employing offices may have to implement multiple complementary controls from these columns to effectively control the hazard (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>).

Engineering Controls

Facilities and Equipment

- Assess job hazards for the feasibility of engineering controls
- Ensure ventilation and water systems operate properly
- Alter workspaces to maintain social distancing. Examples include:
 - Configure partitions as a barrier shield
 - Use verbal announcements, signage, and visual cues to promote social distancing
 - Remove/rearrange furniture

Administrative Controls

Management and Communications

- Monitor state and local public health communications about COVID-19
- Encourage sick workers to report symptoms, stay home, and follow CDC guidance
- Develop strategies to:
 - manage worker concerns
 - communicate with workers
- Remind workers of available support services
- Communicate to partners, suppliers, and other contractors concerning any new office policies and practices
- Encourage social distancing and the use of cloth face coverings (if appropriate) in the workplace
- Use technology to promote social distancing (for example, telework and virtual meetings)
- Cancel group events
- Close or limit the use of shared spaces
- Ask constituents who are ill to stay home
- Consider policies that encourage flexible sick leave and alternative work schedules

- Schedule stocking during off-peak hours

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (for example, counters, shelving, displays)
- Provide employees with disposable disinfectant wipes, cleaners, or sprays that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19

Training

Provide employees with training on:

- Policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19
- General hygiene
- Symptoms and what to do if an employee is sick
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Cloth face covers
- Social distancing
- Use of PPE
- Safe work practices

PPE

Conduct a workplace hazard assessment

- Determine what PPE is needed for the specific job duties of the workers in the office based on hazards and other controls present
- Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost

CDC Guidance for Reopening Your Workplace



<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/php/CDC-Activities-Initiatives-for-COVID-19-Response.pdf>

- **Step 1:** Scale up only if the workplace can ensure strict social distancing, proper cleaning and disinfecting requirements, and protection of workers and customers; workers at higher risk for severe illness are recommended to shelter in place
- **Step 2:** Scale up only if the workplace can ensure moderate social distancing, proper cleaning and disinfecting requirements, and protection of workers and customers; workers at higher risk for severe illness are recommended to shelter in place
- **Step 3:** Scale up only if the workplace can ensure limited social distancing, proper cleaning and disinfecting requirements, and protection of workers and customers

In all Steps

- ❖ Follow guidance provided by local and state authorities to determine current mitigation levels in your community
- ❖ Protect employees at higher risk for severe illness by supporting and encouraging options to telework
- ❖ Consider offering high-risk workers specific duties that minimize their contact with constituents and other employees (for example, phone conferences rather than in-person meetings), if agreed to by the worker
- ❖ Encourage any other entities sharing the same workspace to also follow this guidance
- ❖ Provide employees from areas with high transmission of the virus with options to eliminate travel (for example, telework) to workplaces with low transmission of the virus and vice versa

Safety Action

Promote healthy hygiene practices (Steps 1–3)

- Enforce handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, and using cloth face coverings when around others where feasible
- Ensure that adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol, tissues, paper towels, and no-touch trash cans
- Post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 with directions on proper handwashing techniques; the promotion of everyday protective measures like social distancing; and the correct way to wear a face covering

Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation (Steps 1–3)

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects between use
- Avoid the use or sharing of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected
- Ensure the safe and correct application of disinfectants (read and understand instructions)

- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors (do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to individuals and employees using the workspace)
- Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water

Promote social distancing (Steps 1–3)

- Consider installing physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, and changing workspace layouts to ensure all individuals remain at least 6 feet apart
- Close communal spaces, such as break rooms, if possible (Step 1) or stagger their use and clean and disinfect in between uses (Steps 2 and 3)
- Encourage telework for as many employees as possible
- Consider rotating or staggering shifts to limit the number of employees in the workplace at the same time
- Replace in-person meetings with videoconference or teleconference calls whenever possible
- Cancel all group events, gatherings, or meetings of more than 10 people in Step 1, of more than 50 people in Step 2, and any events where social distancing of at least 6 feet cannot be maintained between participants in all Steps
- Restrict (Step 1) or consider limiting (Step 2) any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations
- Limit any sharing of foods, tools, equipment, or supplies

Limit travel and modify commuting practices (Steps 1–3)

- Postpone all nonessential travel (Step 1) and consider resuming nonessential travel in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance (Steps 2 and 3)
- Ask employees who use public transportation to consider using teleworking to promote social distancing
- Train all managers and staff in the safety actions cited above, and consider conducting the training virtually or, if in-person, ensure that social distancing is maintained

Monitoring and Preparing

Checking for signs and symptoms (Steps 1–3)

- Consider conducting routine, daily health checks (for example, temperature and symptom screening) of all employees
- If implementing health checks, conduct them safely, respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations. Confidentiality should be respected. Employing offices may use examples of screening methods in the CDC's General Business Frequently Asked Questions (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html>) as a guide.
- Encourage employees who are sick to stay home

Plan for when an employee becomes sick (Steps 1–3)

- Employees with symptoms (fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at work should immediately be separated and sent home
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone sick to their home or to a health care facility
- Notify local health officials, staff, and customers (if possible) immediately of a possible case while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other applicable federal and state privacy laws
- Close off areas used by the sick person until after cleaning and disinfection, and wait 24 hours to clean and disinfect. If it is not possible to wait 24 hours, wait as long as possible before cleaning and disinfecting. Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants, and keep disinfectant products away from children.
- Inform those who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home, self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop. If a person does not have symptoms, follow appropriate CDC guidance for home isolation.
- Sick employees should not return to work until they have met the CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation

Maintain healthy operations (Steps 1–3)

- Implement flexible sick leave and other modifiable policies and practices, such as telework, if feasible
- Monitor absenteeism of employees, and create a roster of trained back-up staff
- Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Employees should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- Create and test communication systems for employees for self-reporting and notification of exposures and closures
- Support coping and resilience among employees

Closing (Steps 1–3)

- Check state and local health department notices daily about transmission of the virus in the area and adjust operations accordingly. Be prepared to consider closing for a few days if there is a case of COVID-19 in the workplace—or for longer if cases increase in the local area.