OVERVIEW

As valued components of a community, businesses not only provide jobs and services but also local leadership. During the COVID-19 pandemic, community protection activities are a major—and foundational—part of the broader public health response for pandemic control. Other tools include testing, contact tracing and case investigation, supported isolation and quarantine, and vaccination. As leaders within their communities, businesses can take action to slow the spread of COVID-19, protecting employees and clients, for the sake of maintaining operations, sustaining livelihoods, and preventing community transmission—saving lives and moving the needle toward normalcy.

All procedures recommended within this document are meant to be followed in conjunction with standard OSHA and CDC guidelines, as well as state- or jurisdictional-specific guidelines that may be in place. Strategies should be customized to target populations and local contexts. Consider local reopening phases, community transmission levels and sources, and other community indicators when developing operational plans. Be prepared to amend plans as local circumstances change; have a plan in place to communicate changes to staff and customers clearly and quickly.

It is important to also consider equity challenges to ensure that community protection strategies do not exacerbate disparities. Information should be digestible and available in a variety of locally spoken languages with cultural sensitivities in mind and should provide accessible messages connecting those in need with support services and other resources that will enable them to adhere to operating procedures and protective measures. Employers play a major role in allowing their employees to safely isolate and quarantine with supportive, flexible policies and adequate paid time off.

PROACTIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Businesses can proactively implement measures to protect staff, customers, and the wider community by promoting behaviors that prevent spread and maintaining healthy physical environments and group settings. Indeed, research has shown the particular importance of quality mask-wearing, good airflow, frequent rapid testing, and worker pods. Multilayered safety efforts should be employed, as no single prevention method is entirely effective.

Minimizing Employee Exposure: Businesses should prioritize employee safety, proactively instituting protective measures and also outlining reporting and response procedures when an employee does become ill.

- Any employee who is able to complete their duties from home should do so.
- Employees at high risk for COVID or serious consequences of infection should work from home whenever able (*High risk is defined as: Age $\geq$ 65 years, pregnant, or those with a chronic medical condition associated with increased risk*).
- Shifts should be staggered to minimize number of employees working at any given time.
  - Consider adjusting hours to maintain fewer employees and customers in the place of business at any given time.
  - Stagger employee arrival and departure times.
- All employees should complete a self-reported symptom and exposure screening prior to entering the establishment (**See Appendix 1**). Screening should take place in a location that is not a confined space (small office); screening questions should be administered privately.
  - A de-identified summary log of the symptom screening should be kept and provided to the local Department of Health upon request.
  - Maintain a daily record of employees and vendors within the place of business that goes back a minimum of

30 days.

- o Any individual who reports ≥ 1 positive response on the symptom screening should be referred for COVID-19 testing and allowed paid time off to test, and isolate or quarantine if recommended.
  - The employee should not return to work until after period of recommended isolation is complete if he/she receives a positive test, or once symptoms resolve if test is negative.
  - If an individual is a contact of someone confirmed to have COVID-19 (determined by the symptom screening), he/she should quarantine or isolate as recommended for the entire period regardless of test results.

Workplace Preparation

- Remove unnecessary items from bathrooms and break rooms (e.g. candles, beauty supplies, etc.) to reduce possible exposure sources.

Workplace Sanitization

- One employee per shift should be designated as responsible for sanitizing the workplace. This includes:
  - o Sanitizing high-traffic areas and high-touch surfaces (including doorknobs, counter tops, handles, light switches, phones, keyboards, cash registers) every hour with an EPA-approved disinfectant.
  - o Sanitizing other areas not included in the above category at the beginning and end of the day as well as once per shift at a minimum, as well as whenever visibly dirty.
  - o Maintenance of a log with the date, time, and scope of last cleaning for a minimum of 30 days **(see Appendix 2**).
- Employees should be provided sanitization, cleaning, and disinfection supplies free of charge, as well as time for sanitization practices, which are considered part of his or her job duties.
- Use HVAC air filter systems whenever possible; ensure system are regularly maintained. Doors and windows should remain open whenever possible.

Personal Hygiene

- All employees must sanitize hands with a product containing >60% alcohol (or wash with soap and water for > 20 seconds) prior to beginning their shift, returning from the bathroom, and returning from a break.
- Employees are to wear appropriate face coverings at all times while indoors, or within 6 feet of another person. The CDC recommends tight-fitting surgical masks or a layered cloth mask atop a surgical mask for optimal protection.
  - o Appropriate face coverings include: cloth, surgical masks, N95 or KN95 respirators, and face shields.
    - All face coverings must be cleaned or replaced after use.
    - No sharing of face coverings may be permitted at any time.
    - Reference the CDC guidelines on face coverings for more information.
  - o Replacement face coverings should be available free of charge, provided by the employer.
- Hand sanitizer with >60% alcohol should be available free of charge to all employees and customers; ensure freely available and regularly stocked hand soap in bathrooms.

Social Distancing

- If possible, facilities should reduce the number of people in confined spaces, particularly in situations where masks are not consistently worn. Refer to local guidance for capacity limits.
- All individuals must maintain a separation of > 6 feet of one another unless from the same household.

- In situations where physical distancing of > 6 feet is not feasible (e.g. cash registers), physical barriers (such as plexiglass) should be installed, consistent with OSHA Guidelines.

- Occupancy of areas such as elevators, stock rooms, areas behind registers, and other small spaces should be reduced to one person at a time. If that is not possible, at most 50% of maximum capacity should be allowed.

- Prioritize remote options such as online, pick-up, and delivery options, as well as appointment and scheduling options when relevant.

- Utilize curbside pick-up or delivery whenever possible.

- Floor markers should be installed to facilitate appropriate distancing in any location where a customer may congregate or wait (e.g. for pick-up, for the restroom, at a cash register, etc.), and to facilitate unidirectional flow down aisles.

- Breaks for employees should be staggered to facilitate social distancing (> 6 feet apart).

- Consider installing no-touch trash cans, motion-sensed soap, sanitizer, and paper towel dispensers, and contactless payment systems whenever possible, including pay-ahead options.

- Accept payment via credit cards. If credit cards are not feasible, exact cash or check may be accepted.

- No business cards, promotional material, coupon cards, or any other such materials should be distributed at any time. Consider using QR codes, or posting laminated information where it can be read easily as an alternative to distributed materials.s

- Discourage handshakes or other forms of physical contact between individuals.

- Discourage employees from sharing items, both personal (e.g. phones, food, etc.) and work tools whenever possible.

- If sharing items must occur, such items must be sanitized between uses.

- All work-related gatherings such as meetings should take place virtually whenever possible. If in-person meetings are necessary, they should be held in an open, well-ventilated area; all parties must maintain > 6 feet separation and wear appropriate face coverings. Attendance should be strictly kept to those absolutely necessary.

- Limit deliveries from vendors to one vendor at a time, with scheduled appointments and appropriate sanitization between deliveries.

Communication

- Signs should be posted to remind customers and staff about hygiene and social distancing practices. Be sure to have signs covering the following topics (**see Appendix 3**):
    - Masks/face coverings (including proper use)
    - Hand washing/sanitizing
    - Social distancing
    - Staying home if symptomatic or exposed to someone with COVID-19
- A copy of safety plans should be visibly posted on premises.
- Business owners/managers must communicate quickly to staff if another employee becomes symptomatic or tests positive and allow employees time off to test if they may have been exposed.
- Develop means for communication with employees and customers to provide regular updates and clear information about changing procedures.
- Provide employees with information regarding support services.

Customer Considerations

- In businesses operating with appointments (such as personal care services), customers should fill out a symptom screen prior to entering the facility.
- Post visible signage (in multiple language, if relevant) to direct customers not to enter the premises if they are ill.
- If possible, restrict certain hours for vulnerable and at-risk customers.
- A daily log should be kept with customer name and contact information dating back a minimum of 30 days to support contact tracing (**see Appendix 4**).
    - o Businesses may be expected to provide this information to the Department of Health upon request.
    - o Follow local guidelines for protecting this information.
- All customers are to wear appropriate face coverings when not eating or drinking, consistent with CDC guidelines.
    - o Make sure replacement face coverings are available free of charge.
- Patrons will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer (or wash hands with soap for at least 20 seconds): before entering the store or businesses, before and after eating or drinking, after using the restroom, before and after touching face covering, after coughing, sneezing, or blowing nose.

RESPONSIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES

In the event of positive COVID-19 cases and/or exposure, businesses should have in place a set of operational plans to respond, report, inform, and move toward reopening. Businesses should implement flexible sick leave policies and ensure that exposed or infected employees are adequately supported to safely isolate or quarantine for the recommended time period.

Infected Individuals
- **See Appendix 5 for exposure notification templates**
- **See below Table 1 for infected individual considerations**
- Refer to CDC guidance on quarantine instructions for people who have been vaccinated for COVID-19. Vaccinated persons exposed or potentially exposed to COVID-19 are not required to quarantine if they meet the **all** of the following criteria:
    - o Are fully vaccinated; are within 3 months following receipt of the last dose in the series; have remained asymptomatic since the current exposure.
- If an employee becomes infected with COVID-19, the facility should contact the local Department of Health to report the case and to initiate contact tracing, aided by the employee logs on file.
    - o If symptomatic, the employee will call their doctor and isolate for 10 days from symptom onset. The employee may not return to the facility until after the isolation period **and** after a period of at least 72 hours without symptoms.
    - o If asymptomatic, the employee may return to the facility 10 days after the date of last positive test.
    - o The staff must also re-clean the entire facility in accordance with CDC Guidelines.
- If a customer becomes infected with COVID-19, the manager of the establishment will contact the Department of Health to initiate contact tracing, aided by the customer and employee logs on file. That individual should be instructed to call their doctor and isolate for 10 days from symptom onset. That individual may not return to the facility until after the isolation period **and** there has been a period of at least 72 hours without symptoms.
    - o The staff must also re-clean the entire facility in accordance with CDC Guidelines.
- If there are > 2 positive cases of COVID-19 within the place of business within 14 days, the facility **must** report the cluster to the Department of Health who will further assist the facility regarding infection control strategies.

Table 1: Infected Individual Scenarios

What if...	Reporting and Testing	Contact Tracing	Return to Work
An employee learns they are an exposed contact of someone with COVID-19	Employee immediately leaves business and goes to testing site	Encourage employee to cooperate with Dept of Health on contact tracing	Employee returns to work after full quarantine period
An employee becomes infected with COVID-19	Facility contacts Dept of Health to report case	Facility works with Dept of Health to initiate contact tracing, and turn over records/materials (and instructs employees to cooperate/otherwise conduct their own internal contact tracing)	Symptomatic employee returns to work after full isolation period and 72 hours without symptoms Asymptomatic employee returns to work 10 days after last positive test
A customer (dating back <2 weeks) becomes infected with COVID-19	Facility contacts Dept of Health to report case, IF Dept of Health did not already report case to business	Facility works with Dept of Health to initiate contact tracing, and turn over records/materials (and instructs employees to cooperate/otherwise conduct their own internal contact tracing)	Customer is able to return to facility after full isolation period and 72 hours without symptoms
There are > 2 positive cases of COVID-19 within the place of business within 14 days	Report cluster to Dept of Health		

Closures: Guidance on closures depends on business type and locality. Refer to local health officials for guidance.

Reporting

- A daily log should be kept with customer name and contact information for a minimum of 30 days to support contact tracing.
  - All businesses should provide this information to the Department of Health upon request.
- Businesses should report cases immediately to the Department of Health.
- Employers should take precautions to ensure employee health information is kept private and stored separately from employee personnel files.

TESTING & VACCINATION

Testing: COVID-19 testing should be incorporated into business workplaces as a part of an overall preparedness, response, and control plan for COVID-19. Widely available testing is a major tool to understand and prevent transmission (much of which is via asymptomatic people). Testing may be used for people in non-health care work settings to detect infections among symptomatic and asymptomatic people. See CDC guidance here. Employers should not require negative tests to allow employees to return to work if they have completed the appropriate isolation and/or quarantine period.

- Employers should consult with state or local health officials to determine the best course of action for implementing employee testing.

- o   Some jurisdictions may offer payment and/or test provision for businesses.
- o   Consider developing reporting plans with local health officials; develop measures to notify employees and customers of test results and support them to safely isolate or quarantine.
- o   Refer to [CDC considerations for business-related COVID-19 testing](#).
- Workplace-based testing should not be performed without informed consent and appropriate privacy protections. Please [refer to CDC guidance on consent, disclosures, and privacy](#).

Vaccination: Safe, effective COVID-19 vaccines are an important tool for protecting individuals and ending the pandemic, in conjunction with continued and diligent community protection efforts, testing, contact tracing and case investigation, and supported isolation and quarantine. ***All guidelines and protocols in this document must be continued even if all employees are vaccinated***

- Employers should provide paid time off to employees to get vaccinated when they are eligible, alleviating scheduling concerns.
  - o   Businesses and employers can potentially play a role in vaccination efforts:
    - Many businesses and employers are pillars of their communities and in a unique position of being able to are able to serve as trusted messengers about vaccination to their employees and customers. Refer to local Department of Health for guidance and materials.
    - In some cases, business may be able to serve as vaccination or testing sites within their communities, or provide services and/or goods to vaccine sites and staff. Confer with local Department of Health for more information.
- [In December 2020, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) concluded that employers generally (with exceptions) can mandate that employees receive a U.S. FDA-authorized or approved vaccine.](#) The EEOC—the agency that enforces laws against workforce discrimination—direction considers legal protections under the ADA, privacy issues, and other federal employment laws.
  - o   Medical conditions and religious beliefs protected under Title VII are examples of exemptions to an employer-imposed mandate. Those seeking exemptions should be offered "reasonable accommodation" such as an option to wear a mask or work from home.
  - o   Employers should consider not only state and local law in this area, but also [vaccine hesitancy and equity concerns](#) when considering vaccine mandates and should seek guidance from local health officials.
  - o   Historical precedent does exist for employers to compel worker vaccinations. For example, many hospital systems require annual flu shots.
  - o   Employers do not have the right to require medical examinations, or to seek private information about physical or mental conditions.

BUSINESS-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Daycares & Child Care Programs

Guidelines apply to the reopening of places of child care programs, which include daycare programs, summer camps, after school programs, home daycares, private child care centers, pre-kindergarten programs at private or public schools, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, temporary child care programs operating for children of essential service providers. These guidelines do NOT apply to any overnight program.

Gym & Fitness Centers

Offices

These guidelines apply to the reopening of businesses and offices, which include but are not limited to professional services, non-profit organizations, technology services, administrative support, higher education administration, and front offices for other companies.

Personal Care

These guidelines apply to the reopening of personal care facilities, which include and are limited to the following: beauty salons, barber shops, cosmetology shops, electrology facilities, hair braiding shops, massage parlors, nail salons, tanning salons, tattoo parlors, and spas—including day spaces and medical spas, but NOT including saunas, steam rooms, or shared bathing facilities.

Places of Worship

Restaurants & Bars

Guidelines apply to the reopening of restaurants and bars. These guidelines do NOT apply to food trucks, farmers markets, grocery stores, or cafes.

__K-12 schools, vocational schools, colleges, and universities__ have different and complex concerns and requirements for operation and reopening; as such, recommendations pertaining to their operation are not included within this document. Please refer to CDC guidance and PIH documents on K-12 schools here.

APPENDIX

1. **Sample Symptom and Exposure Screening Templates**

   - CDC Facility

   - Fresno, CA Department of Public Health

   - Washington State Department of Health

2. **Sample Cleaning Log**

   - NYC Health COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection Log Template

3. **Sample Safety Communications Materials**

   - Ohio Department of Health Retail Signage

   - State of Connecticut Retail Signage

   - City of San Antonio, TX Masking Signage (Spanish)

   - New York State Curbside and In-store Pickup Retail Guidelines

4. **Sample Contact Log**

   - Washington State Voluntary Customer Contact Log Template

5. **Sample Exposure Notification Templates**

   - Washington, D.C. Department of Health

   - City of Berkeley, CA Department of Health