

Phase Two Guidance
Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Office Buildings

During Phase Two, the public and businesses must adopt behaviors and rigorous safeguards to reduce risk for all. **The following measures should be implemented to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst employees, visitors, and the community.** For additional information, visit coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo.

Please note that any individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, must not enter an office building due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

Prepare to Reopen

- While conditions are improving, businesses must remain vigilant in their mitigation measures to combat the spread of COVID-19.
- Protocols must be established to safely increase the presence of on-site employees and contractors.
- Per Mayor’s Order 2021-038, Businesses shall implement plans to safely increase presence of on-site employees and contractors, in compliance with public health guidance, in the expectation that public health metrics may continue to improve to allow for further phases of reopening.

Everyday Prevention Measures

- **Employees should stay at home if feeling unwell** or if recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Employees should **practice social distancing**. Maintain at least 6 feet distance from other people when possible.
- Employees and any visitors **must wear a cloth face covering** at all times in all areas of the business where they are likely to come within six feet of another person.
 - Masks and cloth face coverings protect the wearer and protect other people.
 - Masks are most effective if they fit snugly to the face and have 2-3 layers of tightly woven fabric.
 - Wearing a mask is not required when a person is in an enclosed office that no one else is permitted to enter.
 - For more information about mask wearing, see *Masks and Cloth Face Coverings for the General Public* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- Gloves should be worn only as indicated per routine job responsibilities
- Perform frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
 - Key times to perform hand hygiene include:
 - Before and after using the toilet;
 - Before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings;
 - Before and after work shifts and work breaks;
 - Before and after services to each client;
 - After handling belongings of other people; and
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Considerations for Employers

- **Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace.** Conduct a

through assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards that could increase risks for COVID-19 transmission.

- The office building employer, owner, or manager should create a [COVID-19 workplace health and safety plan](#) for their office(s).
- Include all employees in the workplace in communication plans — for example management, staff, relief employees, janitorial staff, maintenance staff, and supervisory staff.
 - If contractors are employed in the workplace, develop plans to communicate with the contracting company regarding modifications to work processes and requirements for the contractors to prevent transmission of COVID-19.
- The [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) has detailed recommendations that all employers can use to protect their workers and clients.
- Provide supplies to allow for frequent hand hygiene (e.g. alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol) at each workstation and in other easily accessible locations.
- Provide employees adequate time to wash their hands and access to soap, clean water, and single-use paper towels.
- Provide staff with face masks or cloth face coverings and instructions on their safe use.
- Implement leave policies that are flexible and non-punitive, and that allow sick employees to stay home. Leave policies are recommended to account for the following:
 - Employees who report COVID-19 symptoms,
 - Employees who were tested for COVID-19 and test results are pending,
 - Employees who tested positive for COVID-19,
 - Employees who are a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19
 - Employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.
- Keep abreast of current law, which has amended both the DC Family and Medical Leave Act and the DC Sick and Safe Leave Law and created whole new categories of leave, like Declared Emergency Leave.
- Learn about and inform your employees about COVID-related leave provided through new federal law, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and all applicable District law relating to sick leave.
- Do not assume that workers who are over 65 have a disability for purposes of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Educate employees about COVID-19. Refer to coronavirus.dc.gov for more information.
- Office buildings that provide services to the public (e.g., non-essential retail) and employees (e.g., gyms, food retail) should follow setting-specific guidance available at coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo.

Avoid Close Contact and Reduce Touchpoints

- Modify or adjust seats, furniture, and workstations to maintain social distancing of 6 feet between employees.
- Identify work and common areas where employees could have close contact (within 6 feet) with others and implement interventions to facilitate social distancing in these locations.
 - Install floor decals and visual markers as needed to promote physical distancing in the building, including in work areas and other areas such as waiting rooms, lobbies, meeting rooms, break rooms, parking lots, entrance and exit areas, and locker rooms.
 - Replace high-touch communal items, such as coffee pots, water coolers, and bulk or buffet-style snacks and meals, with alternatives such as pre-packaged, single-serving items and automatic water bottle refilling stations, and allow employees to bring their own personal coffee pots or hot water heaters if it is safe to do so.
- Use visual cues to help prevent congregating in public areas. Remove chairs from waiting areas to ensure people do not sit close together or wait in groups.

- Consider implementing ‘staff rotations’ or ‘staff shifts’ for workers in commercial offices, grouping employees into A and B cohorts that use facilities at different times and don’t overlap.
- Stagger break times as feasible to reduce the density of employees in common areas such as break rooms.

Screen and Monitor for Symptoms

- Perform screening of (e.g., symptom questionnaires) of employees daily, prior to entering the business, over the phone or in person. Screen visitors who are attending meetings or will have close contact with the staff.
 - For **Screening Tool Guidance**, visit coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance
- Employees and visitors who report symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19 must not enter the premises.
- Post signs in parking areas and entrances that ask guests and visitors to wear cloth face coverings, not enter the building if they are sick, and if possible, stay 6 feet away from employees.
- If an employee develops any symptoms of COVID-19 during the workday, there must be a plan in place for that individual to immediately isolate, notify their supervisor, and leave the building.
- Management must maintain a daily record of individuals who have been at the business for at least 30 days to facilitate contact tracing. Information collected must include name, date and time of visit, phone number, and email (if available). This information must be provided within 24 hours if requested by DC Health if a case of COVID-19 occurs at your establishment, in order to assist with contact tracing.

Building Considerations

- Consider making the following improvements to improve building ventilation (cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html):
 - Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows.
 - Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms).
 - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
 - Decrease occupancy of spaces with poor ventilation.
 - Improve central air filtration to the highest level compatible with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.
 - Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
 - Turn off any demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours.
 - Consider portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning (especially in higher risk areas).
 - Keep systems running longer hours, 24/7 if possible, to enhance air exchanges in the building space.
 - Consult with a specialist to see what works for your building.
- If the building was closed for an extended period of time, ensure all water systems are safe to use. For more information, see CDC’s Guidance for Reopening Buildings after Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html.

Clean and Disinfect

- Businesses should have a comprehensive plan for cleaning and disinfecting high touch

surfaces (e.g., workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, printer/copiers, drinking fountains and doorknobs, restrooms) routinely throughout the day.

- For more information on cleaning and disinfecting workplaces and disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19, see the CDC website [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html)

Establish a Plan for COVID-19 Exposure

- Establish a plan in the event an employee or visitor is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Identify a point of contact at the business that an employee can notify if they test positive for COVID-19 and choose to disclose this information.
- If an employee chooses to report to the business that they are positive for COVID-19, the business should have a notification process to share the following with staff:
 - Education about COVID-19, including the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
 - Referral to the Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov)
 - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District Columbia, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/testing)
- Refer to the guidance “First Steps for Non-Healthcare Employers when Employees Test Positive for COVID-19” at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)
 - A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period, during that person’s infectious period.
 - The infectious period starts two days before symptom onset and typically ends 10 days after symptom onset (or test date for people who do not have symptoms).
- Businesses must notify DC Health when:
 - An employee who interacts frequently with patrons notifies the business they **tested positive for COVID-19** (not before results come back)
AND
 - The person was on the premises **during their infectious period**.
- Notify DC Health by submitting an online form on the DC Health COVID-19 Reporting Requirements website dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements:
 - Submit a **Non-Healthcare Facility COVID-19 Consult Form**.
- An investigator from DC Health will follow up within 48 hours to all appropriately submitted notifications. Please note this time may increase as cases of COVID-19 increase in the District.

These recommendations will continue to be updated. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov) for the most updated information.

This document does not address laws relating to employment, benefits, privacy, disability, discrimination, occupational safety and health, or other topics. Consult an attorney on which laws may apply to your office and how to conform with them.