

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

During Phase Two, the public and businesses will be required to adopt new behaviors and rigorous safeguards to reduce risk for all. In Phase Two, office buildings, such as those housing government offices will reopen; others may welcome some additional employees back; and still others may prepare for reopening in later phases. This guidance will assist office building owners, managers, and employers in the reopening process. Prior to moving from a closed, telework, or minimum business operations only posture, 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.

No individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, should 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

- To the greatest extent consistent with business operations, businesses should continue to allow telework.
- **Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace.** Conduct a thorough 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.
- If your office provides services to the public, employers should allow services by appointment only to avoid crowding.

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 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.
 - When scheduling appointments via telephone or online, ask visitors to wear a cloth face covering when they enter the building and while they receive services.
 - Wearing a mask is not required when a person is in an enclosed office that no one else is permitted to enter.

- 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

- 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
- Provide supplies to allow for frequent hand hygiene (e.g. soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol) at each workstation and in customer/visitor areas (e.g. lobbies and waiting areas).
- 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 returning to 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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
- 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.
- You must deny admission to someone who refuses to wear a mask, unless a mask is not recommended due to a medical condition.
- Do not assume that workers who are over 65 have a disability for purposes of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Building Considerations

- If the building was closed for an extended period of time, remember to check HVAC systems and 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.
- Ensure that ventilation systems work properly, and increase air circulation as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, and other methods, if doing so is safe and not detrimental to the building's HVAC systems.

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

Establish a Plan for COVID-19 Exposure

- Establish a plan in the event that an employee or patron is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Identify a point of contact at the establishment that an employee can notify if they test positive for COVID-19 and choose to disclose this information.
- If an individual develops any of the symptoms above during the workday, there should be a plan in place for that individual to immediately isolate, notify their supervisor, and leave the facility.
- If an employee chooses to report to the establishment that they are positive for COVID-19, the establishment 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
 - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District

Columbia, available at coronavirus.dc.gov/testing

- Establishments should notify DC Health when:
 - an employee notifies the establishment they tested positive for COVID-19 (not before results come back)
AND
 - the employee interacts frequently with the public
OR
 - if a visitor/customer notifies the establishment they tested positive for COVID-19
- 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 email notifications.

These recommendations will continue to be updated. Please visit <https://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.