

Business Safe Start COVID-19 Public Health Planning Guidance



Whatcom County
HEALTH
Department



Under Governor Inslee's "Safe Start" proclamation, businesses are required to establish and implement workplace safety measures in accordance with guidance available on the Safe Start webpage: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/safe-start>.

This public health framework is for consideration only and does not include legal or regulatory advice or recommendations on how to address the COVID-19 situation for your business or employees. Each business is responsible to seek appropriate and up-to-date guidance and follow rules from public authorities before the implementation of any measures. This document will be updated as new information emerges and the most current version is available on the Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) website.

General Information

- Adhere to federal, state, and local public health and worker safety guidelines, available at the Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) website.
- Develop a Safe Work Plan that is self-monitored and updated regularly based on evolving public health guidelines.
- Assign someone to regularly monitor, update, and communicate with employees any changes to the Safe Work Plan.
- Post visible signage at all entry points for workers, volunteers, and visitors of shared expectations and responsibilities (including proper hygiene & sanitization, physical distancing/PPE guidance, and information for reporting concerns). See samples from [CDC](#) and [Governor Inslee](#).
- As of May 22, everyone in Whatcom County is directed to wear a face-covering while at any indoor or outdoor public space where you may be within 6 feet of someone who does not live with you. For more information and instructional videos, visit the [Directive to Wear Face Coverings page](#).
- As of June 8, per Governor Inslee, all employees will be required to wear a [cloth facial covering](#), except when working alone in an office, vehicle, or at a job site, or when the job has no in-person interaction. Employers must provide cloth facial coverings to employees unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection under the Department of Labor and Industries' safety and health rules and guidance. Refer to [Coronavirus Facial Covering and Mask Requirements](#) for additional details. Employees may choose to wear their own facial coverings at work, provided it meets the minimum requirements.
- Businesses must also post signage strongly encouraging customers and clients to wear cloth face coverings.

Vulnerable Workers and Customers

- Some people are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (individuals over age 65, and those with underlying medical conditions such as, but are not limited to, chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, hypertension, severe heart conditions, weakened immunity, severe obesity, diabetes, liver disease, and chronic kidney disease that requires dialysis).
- Employer provides a confidential means for an employee to notify the employer and request alternative work. Consider offering vulnerable workers duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees (e.g., restocking shelves rather than working as a cashier), if agreed to by the worker.
- Employers should take particular care to reduce vulnerable workers' risk of exposure to COVID-19 while making sure to be compliant with relevant ADA and ADEA regulations.
- Support and encourage options to telework.
- Ensure that any other entities sharing the same workspace also follow this guidance.

Health Screenings for Workers and Customers

- Provide education to workers and volunteers in a language they can easily understand on symptom detection, sources of high risk to COVID-19, prevention measures (such as handwashing and social distancing), and leave benefits/policies (e.g., unemployment insurance for workers that need to self-quarantine).
- Ask workers/volunteers to self-certify that they have experienced no COVID-19 symptoms since the last day they physically visited the workplace.
- Encourage workers/volunteers to do regular temperature checks at home before coming to work.
- Ask workers/volunteers to stay home and seek medical guidance if they are experiencing any known COVID-19 symptoms.
- Conduct routine temperature checks & screenings once per day. Encourage a single point of entry for ease of screenings or set up a kiosk if a single point of entry is not practical. Mark off a minimum of 6-foot distances for the screening queue.
- Consider asking visitors and customers to self-screen and not enter if they answer yes to any of the screening questions.

When an Employee becomes Sick or is Exposed to COVID-19

- Employees with symptoms of COVID-19 at work should immediately be sent home and referred to a healthcare provider to screen for testing for COVID-19. Symptoms may include cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell.
- Identify a location in your workplace where ill workers or customers can be isolated from others until they can safely be transported home or to a healthcare facility.
- Inform employees who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms and follow Washington Department of Health (DOH) guidance if symptoms develop.
- Advise sick staff members to go home and isolate, call their provider, and not to return until they have met DOH criteria to discontinue home isolation.
- Contact the WCHD to develop a plan to notify and isolate all workers/volunteers in contact with an individual that develops symptoms (while maintaining confidentiality).
- Provide leave options for people having to self-isolate/self-quarantine for COVID-19.

Hygiene and Cleaning

- Train staff on proper cleaning procedures to ensure the safe and correct application of disinfectants. Use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 and that are appropriate for the surface.
- Perform routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door handles, workstations, cash registers) and shared employee restrooms at least daily and shared objects (e.g., payment terminals, tables, countertops) between use.
- Perform nightly deep cleaning, following appropriate guidance.
- Encourage frequent handwashing and provide hand sanitizer for employees and visitors, especially at entrances/exits and other high-traffic areas..
- Designate a hygiene leader for each shift and facility who is responsible for protocol audits.
- Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use them until after cleaning and disinfection. Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If it is not possible to wait 24 hours, wait as long as possible.

Reporting Potential COVID-19 Cases

- Notify WCHD staff immediately of a confirmed case of COVID-19 or if two or more possible cases are identified within 14 days of each other at 360-778-6100 or 360-715-2588 (after hours).
- Log all workers and volunteers that come on premise for purposes of supporting public health contact tracing. The log should have a name, phone number, date, and time.
- Have an available contact for all workers, volunteers, and visitors to report concerns and/or potential violations of the Safe Work Plan.
- Have a single point of contact (this should be HR/employee health whenever possible if dealing with protected health information of staff) for public health to reach your business for contact tracing of staff, volunteers, or clients/customers.

Distancing

Workspaces

- Encourage employees to work from home when possible.
- Require employees to wear a cloth facial covering when not working alone. This is not a substitute for 6-foot physical distancing. See our Guidance on Cloth Face Coverings for additional information.
- Maintain physical distancing of a minimum of 6 feet apart wherever possible - with staff and visitors/customers.
- Create isolated work cells/teams where possible.
- Limit shared workspaces and office supplies/resources. Move to touchless sign-in/sign-out device or provide hand sanitizer next to fingerprint machine.
- Consider rotating or staggering shifts to limit the number of employees in the workplace at the same time.
- Avoid non-essential person-to-person contact (e.g., handshakes).

Facilities

- Provide workers/volunteers with masks. Everyone in Whatcom County is directed to wear a face-covering while at any indoor or outdoor public space where you may be within 6 feet of someone who does not live with you. (Note: N95 masks should not be used except for public health approved roles).
- Limit the number of visitors allowed to accompany a client/customer in order to maintain appropriate social distancing.
- Stagger entry into facilities by limiting ingress/egress points while maintaining fire exits.
- Re-organize floor layouts to permit physical distancing, such as one-way store/facility aisles, and use distance markings at places of congregation.
- Use plexiglass protection (sneeze guards) between workstations or at check out.
- Use touchless payment options as much as possible. Ask customers and employees to exchange payments by placing them on a receipt tray or on the counter rather than by hand.
- Use no contact pickup options.
- Wipe any pens, counters, or hard surfaces between uses or customers.

Break Rooms, Kitchens, and Cafeterias

- Close communal spaces such as break rooms, if possible, or stagger break times and clean and disinfect in between uses
- Limit cafeteria capacity and services by reducing seating and self-service options
- Limit public kitchens/vending
- Implement reduced maximum capacity limits

Meetings and Gatherings

- Follow the most current guidance regarding gatherings for Safe Start phases.
- Everyone should maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet. Cancel group events if a physical distance of at least 6 feet cannot be maintained.
- Virtual meetings even when in office, or meeting outdoors whenever possible.
- Avoid sitting face-to-face.
- Use training methods that do not involve personal meetings.

Policies, Benefits, Wellness, and Other

Support Working from Home / Alternate Schedules

- Support job shares that allow for reduced hours.
- Offer a partial workforce or alternate day of week operating model. Consider different in-office working hours (e.g. two shifts: 6a - 12p and 1p-7p with time between shifts).
- Provide a one-time home office supply voucher.
- Create a workforce relief/aid fund and adopt a policy on how funds will be distributed.
- Consider providing employer-sponsored buses/transit options to reduce the use of crowded public transportation and promote and enable individual commutes (e.g., subsidized biking/parking).
- Eliminate unnecessary travel. Provide employees from higher transmission areas (earlier Phase areas) opportunities to telework, and avoid traveling to lower transmission (later Phase) areas and vice versa.

Provide Training

- Provide education to workers and volunteers on symptom detection, sources of high risk to COVID-19, prevention measures, and leave benefits/policies.
- Provide content for vulnerable workers to help navigate Back to Work (e.g., aggregate helpful materials, explain evolving gov't benefits).
- Provide technical support for remote workers and virtual meetings.
- Create networks for workers to connect/share remote working best practices.
- Provide on-going training of health guidelines, including handwashing & cleaning.
- Provide guidance on virtual and in-person teams.
- Provide career planning and resources.
- Voucher for online education tools.
- Train managers to support the new Back to Work model.
- Create virtual HR office hours and/or HR hotline.

Offer Wellness Opportunities

- Sponsor well-being challenges geared to staying physically and mentally healthy.
- Access reduced cost and/or free counseling and/or telemedicine consultations.
- Benefit extensions for household members.
- Digital support groups to decrease isolation and share ideas.

Support Alternative Childcare Options

- On-site daycare or study rooms for a limited number of children per day.
- Access to apps to match caregivers with needs (including recently displaced workers).
- Priority for childcare for workers not able to work from home.
- Virtual playdates for families with children of similar ages.