



Office Settings Overview

According to [Pennsylvania's Phased Reopening Plan](#), in the "Red" phase, offices will only be open in-person if such operation is needed to provide a "life-sustaining" service. In the "Yellow" phase, telework still must continue in offices where it is possible. Businesses that switch to in-person operations must follow business and building safety orders. In the "Green" phase, business operations can continue in-person provided state and CDC guidelines are followed. Telework is still encouraged.

These materials and any related updates are provided and intended for general public informational purposes and guidance. While intended to be timely and accurate, please note that federal and state regulations and directives are changing often. To that extent, please continue to monitor this site for any significant modifications and developments.

The following office guidelines from the [American Industrial Hygiene Association \(AIHA\)](#) will help businesses meet or exceed CDC and state recommendations while returning to operation safely.

Employer Tips and Guidelines

- Employers should consider developing a team of professionals to monitor, assess, and implement new COVID-19 transmission risk mitigation strategies.
- Consistently monitor employee wellness and do not let anyone symptomatic report to work. Revisit your leave or sick program to allow for this time off.
- Employees who monitor their temperature at home should update their supervisor if they have a temperature exceeding 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit and stay home.
- Employees and visitors should wear protective masks/face coverings whenever social distancing of at least 6 feet is not possible.
- Consider eliminating reception seating areas and request that guests phone ahead, or install a plastic partition at the reception area.
- Review floorplans and reconfigure seats and the workspace as needed to preserve recommended physical distancing. If physical distancing is not possible, then partitions can be placed between desks.
- Reconfigure workstations so that employees do not face each other. Establish partitions if facing each other cannot be avoided.
- Temporarily replace or eliminate amenities that are handled with high-contact frequency, such as water coolers, coffee makers, and bulk snacks.
- If vending machines are used, provide and require cleaning and disinfecting after each use.
- Reduce tasks requiring large amounts of people to be in one area.
- Employees should be encouraged to use virtual meeting tools in lieu of in-person meetings whenever possible.

- If in-person meetings are essential, consider limiting meetings to 10 people or fewer.
- Conference/meeting rooms that are used should be disinfected on a daily basis at minimum. Disinfectant wipes or spray should be left in each room.
- If meetings are to occur in person, they should be conducted in a quick manner. Lingering and socializing before and after meetings should be discouraged.
- Common areas should be cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis at minimum.
- Regulate the use of common areas with clear signage and physical distancing measures.
- Provide cleaning supplies for employees to utilize before/after they use common spaces and contact surfaces.
- Encourage staff not to linger or socialize in common areas.
- Kitchen/break areas should be cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis at minimum.
- Doors to multi-stall restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching handles if at all possible. Place a trash can by the door if the door cannot be opened without touching the handle.
- For single restrooms, provide signage and materials (paper towels and trash cans) for individuals to use without touching the handles.
- Place signs asking employees to wash hands before and after using the restroom.
- Provide paper towels in restrooms and disconnect or tape off hand air dryers.
- Ensure there is an adequate flow of fresh air to workspaces and maximize fresh air through the ventilation system.
- Clean and disinfect all HVAC intakes and returns daily. Consider seeking input from an HVAC professional.
- If pedestal fans or hard-mounted fans are used, take steps to minimize air from fans blowing from one person directly to another.
- Establish a disinfection routine. All contact surfaces should be disinfected regularly. Use disposable products when possible.
 - If reusable products are used, ensure that these products are maintained, handled and cleaned per product instructions.
 - Consider using a checklist or audit system to track when and how cleaning is conducted.
 - Request that occupants remove items from desks and other surfaces before leaving work each day.
 - Identify items with likely surface contact that are difficult to clean and remove or replace with alternatives.
- Ensure there is no standing water in the workplace.
- If odors or water damage are present prior to reopening, then facility management should be contacted before investigating.
- Outdoor and indoor waste areas should be inspected to ensure that waste was removed prior to shut down and quarantine measures were implemented.
- Communicate that employers may limit office hours and close off or prohibit public access if needed.
- Employers should explore work from home options, staggering work shift/hours, and other flexible approaches for employees.

- If the workplace is located in a multi-tenant location, consider establishing a communication pathway with other tenants to inform of confirmed COVID-19 cases present in the building.
- Platforms for communicating with employees could include emails, texts, automated phone calls, websites, and signage.
- Employers should notify employees of new workplace policies and changes prior to reopening and upon resuming operations.
- Train employees on new or modified work schedules, how they can stay up to date on new scheduling requirements, and how to make requests for schedule changes if a need arises.
- Employees should receive, at minimum, awareness training on cleaning and disinfection products used in the workplace, following OSHA Hazard Communication Standards.
- Health checks and reporting requirements of individuals infected with COVID-19 should be explained to employees prior to reopening and again once operations have resumed.
- Employees should evaluate their health constantly; if they are sick, have a fever above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or other symptoms, or someone at home is sick, they should remain home. NOTE: Employer HR Policies, HIPPA guidelines and other laws should be followed at all times. The Chester County Health Department can be reached at 610-344-6225.
- Employees should practice effective hand hygiene including washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- At minimum, employees should wash their hands upon arrival to work, after touching their face or mask or any common contact surfaces, before leaving work, after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.
- If employees get the urge to sneeze or cough, they should cover their nose, mouth, and mask with a towel or handkerchief.
- Management and leadership are encouraged to continuously check in with employees to ensure that all concerns are heard, understood, and addressed.
- Ensure all protective measures and supplies are available prior to occupancy.

How Employees Can Protect Themselves

- Self-monitor your temperature every morning. Employees who have a temperature exceeding 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit should stay home and notify their supervisor.
- Ask employers of new workplace policies, training and other changes related to all of the above topics.
- Evaluate your health constantly. If you are sick, have a fever above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or other symptoms, or someone at home is sick, then you should remain home. NOTE: Employer HR Policies, HIPPA guidelines and other laws should be followed at all times.
- Practice effective hand hygiene including washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- At minimum, employees should wash their hands upon arrival to work, after touching their face or mask or any common contact surfaces, before leaving work, after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.

- If you get the urge to sneeze or cough, you should cover your nose, mouth, and mask with a towel or handkerchief.
- At all times, wear a face covering or something better if you have it. Let your employer know if you have concerns about any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that may be provided to you.

If an Employee Tests Positive

- If the individual receives a positive test notification while at work, follow established Human Resources policy. If the individual receives a positive test notification while NOT at work, the individual should follow established Human Resources policy, stay home and self-isolate in accordance with Chester County Health Department guidance.
- Close off areas visited by the positive individual. Refer to the [CDC's general cleaning & disinfecting guidance](#) and [guidance in facilities where someone is sick](#).
- Determine who had contact with the positive individual during the time the individual had symptoms as well as 48 hours prior to symptoms. Notify employees who were in close contact with the confirmed individual while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
 - People who had close contact must self-quarantine for 14 days from the date of last contact with the positive individual.
 - "Close contact" is defined as having contact for more than 15 minutes, at a distance of 6 feet or less, with a positive individual.
- Individuals may discontinue home isolation and return to work under the following conditions:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since your fever went away without the use of fever-reducing medication
 - AND improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
 - AND At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
- After returning to work, individuals should:
 - Wear a facemask at all times while at work until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer.
 - Be restricted from contact with individuals at a higher risk (e.g., older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness).
 - Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles).
 - Self-monitor for symptoms. Seek immediate re-evaluation from occupational health/primary care provider and do not work if symptoms recur or worsen.
- The Chester County Health Department will be notified of all confirmed cases through established disease reporting protocols and will follow-up with the individual appropriately. Contact the Chester County Health Department at 610-344-6225.

Supporting Customers and Clients

- Customers or clients should stay home if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms.

- Customers or clients who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor their health.
- Practice effective hand hygiene including washing hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.
- When possible, maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from other individuals.
- Cover coughs or sneezes with a sleeve or elbow, not hands.
- Wear protective masks/face coverings.
- No handshake greetings.
- Increase use of virtual technology.