As states and organizations begin the process of re-opening and returning to work, it is critical that businesses take action to prepare the workplace and their employees for a healthy and safe return. We have developed a checklist of recommendations to help with this transition.

**Develop a return-to-work plan**

- Deputize a workplace coordinator/team responsible for COVID-19 response and tasks.
- Review HR policies and update leave policies and practices to align with public health recommendations, changing regulations, and workplace laws.
- Provide employees with resources for mental health support.
- Implement a staggered employee return-to-work approach.
  - Examples: stagger shift times or divide employees into groups that come in on certain days or weeks.
- Determine who should return first.
  - Consider employees critical to business functions.
- Implement temperature screenings and tests for employees entering the workplace.
- Communicate with your vendors to ensure best practices are aligned.
- Sign up for alerts and announcements from state and local health departments, as well as from the national Centers for Disease Control.
**Prepare your workplace**

- Clean and disinfect facilities.
  - Refer to [CDC recommendations](https://www.cdc.gov).
- Provide extra cleaning and disinfecting supplies.
- Practice routine cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces.
- Improve ventilation in the building.

**Implement social-distancing practices**

- Implement design changes to the workplace to accommodate distance between employees, customers, and visitors (e.g. increasing physical space between employee worksites, use of partitions, etc.)
- Establish guidelines for workplace behaviors:
  - Limit in-person meetings and offer virtual options.
  - Limit the amount of people in one area at any given time.
  - Review travel policies and monitor [CDC travel recommendations](https://www.cdc.gov) to determine whether or not business travel is necessary.

**Keep your team healthy and safe**

- Communicate updates and guidelines to employees as the pandemic evolves.
- Train employees on best practices to mitigate spread:
  - Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.
  - Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
  - Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
  - Avoid using other employees’ phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
  - Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately six feet) from others.
  - Provide and encourage use of face masks.
  - Remind employees that wearing masks or personal protective equipment does not replace or eliminate the need for distancing and proper hygiene.
Keep your team healthy and safe (cont.)

- Hang posters that encourage everyone to take maximum risk prevention.
- Encourage employees that feel sick to stay home.
- What to do if an employee is sick or suspected of being sick:
  - Employees who have symptoms (fever, cough, or shortness of breath) when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors, and sent home.

Evaluate your preparedness plans

- Take time to evaluate your COVID-19 response plan to identify gaps. Here are some examples of information to gather during evaluation:
  - Expectations vs. realities
  - What went well
  - Areas for improvement
  - Unforeseen challenges and response
  - Alternative workspace options
  - Remote work challenges

Prevent outbreaks

To reduce transmission among employees:

- Encourage employees to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms daily.
- Encourage sick employees to stay home.
- Screen employees in the workplace/facility for COVID-19 symptoms.
- Separate sick employees and send them home.
- Educate employees about how they can reduce the spread of COVID-19 at work and at home.
- Provide accommodations for vulnerable employees at higher risk for serious illness such as older adults and those with certain chronic medical conditions.
- Take additional precautions for healthy employees with recent exposure to a person with symptomatic COVID-19.
Prevent outbreaks (cont.)

To maintain healthy business operations:

- Deputize a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.
- Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.
- Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.
- Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from childcare programs and K-12 schools.
- Establish policies and practices for social-distancing.
- Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plan based on local conditions.

To maintain a healthy work environment:

- Consider increasing ventilation rates and/or increasing the percentage of outdoor air circulation to improve ventilation.
- Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and worksite visitors.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection, particularly on frequently-touched surfaces.
- Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after people or employees suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the workplace or facility.
- Avoid attending meetings and gatherings in person, if possible.
- Workplaces/facilities that suspect an outbreak should immediately take the following actions:
  - Fill-out the CDPHE COVID-19 outbreak report form and send it to your local public health agency.
  - Begin identifying staff with COVID-19-like symptoms using the CDPHE COVID-19 line list template.
  - Work with your local public health agency to confirm that an outbreak does exist and to determine the extent of the outbreak.

Mitigate outbreaks

- Temporarily close the workplace/facility once an outbreak is recognized and work with your local public health agency to determine what specific actions should be taken and when it would be safe to re-open.

After re-opening, several additional outbreak mitigation actions should be taken in addition to the above outbreak prevention actions:

- Screen all employees in the workplace/facility for COVID-19 symptoms daily.
- Send sick employees home immediately for isolation.
- Contact trace and identify healthy employees with recent exposure to a person with symptomatic COVID-19.
Mitigate outbreaks (cont.)

- Employees with recent exposure to a person with symptoms of COVID-19 should quarantine at home for 14 days.
- Exclude high-risk employees from workplaces/facilities when outbreaks are ongoing.
- Consider requiring all employees to use facemasks (cloth or otherwise) while in the workplace/facility.
- Implement strict environmental/engineering controls (e.g., increased air exchange, cleaning, etc.)
- Do not rely on testing to “clear” employees to work given current testing limitations.
- Additional workplace/facility closure may be required if widespread transmission continues to occur despite the above measures or if there are not enough staff available to run operations.
- Consult with your local public health agency for additional outbreak mitigation recommendations.

Additional resources

As the process of re-opening and returning to work changes and evolves, we encourage all workplaces to follow CDC and local guidelines on best practices.

For further information on maintaining a culture of preparedness, visit our COVID-19 resources page.