Prepare Your Business or Organization to Reopen Guide

Contents

Background

We have made tremendous progress over the past several weeks slowing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping our Sauk County residents safe. But we have more to do in order to flatten the curve. We must remain committed to using research-based best practices and data to inform our decisions going forward to make sure we can sustain our progress.

The impact of COVID-19 on our economy has been disastrous. A strong economy is vital to public health and safety; we can't have healthy residents and a healthy community without our residents working and our business owners generating income by providing the goods and services we all rely on. Our businesses must be allowed to open as soon as safely possible!

If we open too quickly, without a data-driven plan, we risk a resurgence of COVID-19 and further delaying our return to a strong economy. We must, therefore, open in phases based on risk, local and regional data, and best practices from others states and countries.

More detailed local guidance will be released soon. Until that is released, this guidance is provided to help you prepare to reopen your business. SCPH will be updating our local guidelines regularly, so please check back often for new materials and assistance.

General Business Responsibilities

The business community is not only the driver of our local economy, but also helps the public access goods and services that are directly related to health (e.g. nutrition, physical activity, mental health, and more). We must remain focused on keeping people safe and healthy while also living and working as normally as possible. In order for us to be successful at reenergizing our economy, we must be aware of what the disease is doing and be quickly responsive to it with strategies to lessen its impact.

All businesses must use mitigation strategies to reduce the impact of COVID-19. It will be far more effective for us to employ gentle mitigation strategies (such as physical distancing, monitoring of staff and excluding those who have symptoms or exposure from work, etc.) than it will be for us to handle the consequences of another widespread shutdown. If businesses follow the basic strategies outlined in this document, it will reduce the need for more severe strategies that could result in longer-term economic decline.

Towards achieving this goal, the business community is a critical player in the fight against COVID-19, both as a frontline against spread of virus and as a partner in helping the public understand why this responsiveness is so important. Specific considerations about the role of business include the following (*tools listed are available in the [Business Toolkit](#)*):

o   Protecting the health and safety of employees and customers (*Safety in an Office Space Checklist*; *Safety in a Retail Space Checklist*).
o   Developing a clear, written protocol regarding sick leave for employees in which ill or exposed individuals will actually stay home, thereby decreasing risk to the workplace (*Recommended Elements of a Sick Policy*).

- Implementing an active monitoring program that assesses staff for symptoms and exposure before every shift and is designed to quickly identify and remove exposure risks from the workplace (*Sample Active Monitoring System*; *Sample Sick Policy*; *Quarantine and Isolation Algorithm*).
- Developing a policy that limits the number of customers in the business (*Strategies to Limit Traffic Flow*).
- Considering specially-designated hours for high risk customers (*Recommendations for Designated Shopping Hours*).
- Setting and implementing aggressive infection control policies, such as frequent cleaning of all high-touch surfaces, mandated handwashing, and hand sanitizers at multiple locations throughout the business (*Sample Disinfection Practices; Sample Handwashing Policy*).
- Implementing a no-touch policy for all staff (no handshakes, hugs, high-fives, or fist bumps)
- Preventing large congregations of people in close quarters.
- Consideration of temporarily reassigning employees at high risk for COVID-19 or serious complications to non-public contact duties (*Recommendations for Employees Considered for Reassignment*).
- Developing a policy encouraging employees to be on the lookout for customers exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and how to handle that situation (*Considerations for Handling Symptomatic Customers*).
- Advising the public about recommendations to continue social distancing and to utilize cloth face coverings (*Considerations for Mask Use by Employees*).
- Increasing availability of curbside pickup and delivery, if applicable.
- Developing communication materials to staff and customers regarding changes to your business practices and the importance of adherence to preventive measures to prevent future waves that could harm the economy again.
- Requiring vendors to wash or sanitize their hands immediately upon entering the business.

Preparation Guidelines

1. **Assess your essential functions** and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.
   - Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).
   - Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some goods and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
   - Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
   - Talk with business partners about your response plans. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve our community response efforts.
2. **Implement flexible sick leave** and supportive policies and practices.
   - Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.

- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school or childcare closures.
- Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other to cope with the impacts of this pandemic.

3. **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.
   - Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
   - Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
   - Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
   - Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.
4. Review and utilize the **Reopening Checklist for Businesses** on the next page to help plan your business re-opening.

Reopening Checklist for Businesses

Priority	Customer Service Protocol and Procedures	Tool (Tools can be found in the Business Toolkit)
1	Develop a clear, written protocol regarding sick leave for employees.	Recommended Elements of Sick Policy Sample Sick Leave Policy Quarantine and Isolation Decision Tree Sample Active Monitoring System
2	Develop and implement an active monitoring program that assesses staff for exposure, fever and respiratory symptoms before every shift.	
3	Develop a policy that limits the number of customers in the business at any one time	Strategies to Limit Traffic Flow
4	Place markings (e.g. tape) on floor to keep 6-foot distancing in high traffic areas in the business, especially at cash register and high congregation areas.	
5	Increase frequency of cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting your facility. Wipe down high-touch surfaces at cash registers (credit card touch pad, carts, baskets, conveyer belts) and reception areas between customers.	Sample Disinfection Practices
6	Define handwashing requirements for employees. Post the requirements in breakroom(s), bathrooms, and common areas; and send it out to employees.	Sample Hand-Washing Policy
7	Implement a no-touch policy for all staff members (no handshakes, hugs, fist bumps, high fives, or other close contact).	
8	Place no-touch hand sanitizer at each cash register for use by staff members and customers, if available.	
9	Develop a policy that designates shopping hours for customers at increased risk for severe disease.	Recommendations for Designated Shopping Hours
10	Consider temporarily assigning employees at high risk for coronavirus or serious complications to non-public-contact duties.	Recommendations for Employees Considered for Re-assignment

11	Develop policy encouraging employees to be on the lookout for customers exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and how you would like them to handle that situation.	Considerations for Handling Symptomatic Customers
12	Increase availability/promotion of curb-side pickup if applicable. Consider increasing or offering a delivery service.	
13	Implement protocols to highly encourage everyone to wear cloth face coverings. Consider requiring for customer service staff and those in high traffic areas.	Considerations for Mask Use by Employees
14	Develop communication materials (flyers, social media posts, emails, etc.) regarding changes that are proactive and clearly explain the reasons for these changes in your business.	
15	Require vendors to wash or sanitize their hands immediately upon entering the business.	

General COVID Safety Guidance

Every sector of our community is different, and organizations within each of those sectors are also different. It is not possible to delineate written guidance for every scenario or unique situation. SCPH will release sector-specific guidance which will provide specific requirements for each type of business to keep their employees and customers safe.

Guidance for Individuals

- All vulnerable individuals should continue to shelter in place.
- Members of households with vulnerable members should be aware that by returning to work or other environments where distancing is not practical, they could carry the virus back home; precautions should be taken to protect these vulnerable residents from household members who may pose unintentional risk.
- All individuals, when in public (e.g., parks, outdoor recreation areas, shopping areas), should maximize physical distance from others.
- Avoid socializing in groups of more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing (e.g., receptions, trade shows), unless precautionary measures can be observed.
- Minimize non-essential travel and adhere to CDC guidelines regarding quarantine following travel
- Stop unnecessary visits to nursing homes, congregate facilities, and hospitals

Guidance for Employers

- Worksite Venue and Setup
    - Whenever feasible, strongly encourage staff to work from home, except for the minimum required for basic on-site functions. Employers should continue to encourage telework past the time it is required if feasible, and develop a plan to have staff return to onsite work in phases.
    - Close common areas where personnel are likely to congregate or have close, direct contact; alternatively, employers can consider enforce strict physical distancing protocols, in which workers are kept 6' apart whenever possible.
    - Limit in-person meetings of any size; communicate virtually wherever possible
    - Reduce on-site work hours to minimum needed to sustain operations
    - Stagger shifts and work hours to maximize physical distancing
    - Stagger use of all shared spaces, including bathrooms, breakrooms and lunchrooms
    - Stagger facility entry and exit procedures maintaining at least 6 feet physical distancing
    - Limit non-essential deliveries
    - Limit non-essential visitors (including suppliers and customers) except those approved by senior management
    - Tape off six-by-six-foot boxes on the floor of areas where customers queue up, such as at check- in desks or check-out registers
    - If feasible, use plastic sheeting, plexiglass, or another transparent barrier to separate workers from customers, such as:
        - At check-in desks

- At cash registers
- Between the front and rear seat of vehicles
  - Increase ventilation rates
  - Increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system
- Workplace Policies
  - Encourage on-site workers to wear cloth face coverings
  - Develop an active staff monitoring system that assesses symptoms, exposures, and temperature upon arrival to the worksite (preferred); or if not possible, ask workers to monitor on their own and report them at the beginning of each shift
  - No hand shaking or other forms of physical contact
  - When possible, prevent workers from working at multiple buildings, plants and sites
  - Strongly consider special accommodations for personnel who are members of a vulnerable population
- Guidance for Specific Sectors
  - Activities that take place at school are encouraged to still involve physical distancing, occur in groups less than 10 when possible, and assess and exclude participants who have symptoms or exposure to individuals with COVID-19 or individuals with COVID-19 like symptoms who have not been tested
  - Child care centers are allowed to operate but should still utilize physical distancing as much as possible, try to adhere to the gathering recommendations of 10 or less (this is in addition to all normal childcare-specific guidance of teacher-to-student ratios), and assess and exclude participants who have symptoms or exposure to individuals with COVID-19 or individuals with COVID-19 like symptoms who have not been tested
  - Organized youth activities such as camp, when used to provide childcare for working parents, should still incorporate physical distancing, try to adhere to the gathering recommendations of 10 or less (this is in addition to all normal childcare-specific guidance of teacher-to-student ratios), and assess and exclude participants who have symptoms or exposure to individuals with COVID-19 or individuals with COVID-19 like symptoms who have not been tested
  - Visits to senior living facilities should be prohibited until a vaccine is developed; those who do interact with residents and patients such as staff members must adhere to strict protocols regarding PPE use, hygiene, and active monitoring

Please note that even when businesses and activities are allowable, people over 60, including those who are medically vulnerable, should continue to shelter in place.