

City of Philadelphia: Safe Return to Work Guidelines

Philadelphians are working hard to turn back COVID-19, and they are succeeding. Because of their commitment to various safety protocols and rising vaccination rates, case counts continue to fall. As of June 2, 2021, [the Health Department lifted all density and distance COVID-19 restrictions for Philadelphia](#), on June 11, 2021, [the Health Department adjusted its indoor masking requirements for fully vaccinated individuals](#), and on July 6, 2021, City offices will open to both our workforce and the public.

However, COVID-19 will not be eradicated completely and Philadelphians—and City government—must continue to practice several safety measures to continue to keep the epidemic at bay. As public servants, we must lead by example and take precautions consistently to protect not only our employees, but the residents we serve. Ensuring a Safe Return to Work will continue to be a shared responsibility among City Departments, employees and the public.

The primary objective of the City's Safe Return to Work plan is to continue to bring City employees back to work in a manner that aligns with current Federal, City and State guidelines for the safe reopening of various businesses and industries, while minimizing the potential for the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

The following document provides specific guidance for City operations occurring on-site. If at any point the City must move back to more restrictive measures based upon the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the City will reinstitute more restrictive protocols.

While the City's safety precautions will vary by activity, our general Safety Checklist includes:

- ✓ **Masks** – block the virus from spreading by wearing masks and requiring others to wear them when they are unvaccinated and in certain high-risk situations
- ✓ **Isolate** – keep people who might be carrying the virus safely away from others (ideally at home)
- ✓ **Reduce Crowds** – encourage individuals to maintain safe distance between themselves and others, especially if unvaccinated
- ✓ **Barriers** – maintain barriers in customer service settings to prevent spread where there may be large numbers of members of the public
- ✓ **Handwashing** – reduce the spread of virus from one person to another by washing your hands frequently
- ✓ **Clean** – remove respiratory droplets that may contain virus from surfaces that people may touch
- ✓ **Planning** – follow and regularly update plans on what to do if a City Department is exposed to a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19
- ✓ **Vaccinate** – encourage and incentivize employees to get vaccinated – it is one of the best ways for us to combat the spread of COVID-19 in our City and amongst our employees
- ✓ **Communicate** – ensure staff, customers, and others understand this Safety Checklist

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The City will adhere to this safety checklist at all times. If an employee develops a COVID-19 infection or has a positive test, the City will follow the protocols described in this document to stop the virus from spreading further.

If employees want to report possible health and safety violations in the City of Philadelphia workplace related to COVID-19, they should contact their Department's Safety Officer or Pandemic Coordinator. In addition, the public can report possible health and safety violations observed while accessing City of Philadelphia services by calling 311.

Employees will be expected to adhere to these guidelines and may face discipline, up to and including termination, if found to be in violation of the policies described herein.

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These guidelines are intended for general application to most City operations. However, employees working in settings where regular and close contact occurs with the public or those who are infected or suspected to be infected with COVID-19 must follow any additional health and safety protocols established by their Departments.

[HERE](#) you can find the most current guidelines from the Department of Public Health.

Additional Guidance on Virtual Work

As of July 6, 2021, all City buildings will be re-opened to both our workforce and the public. We recognize that for many departments virtual work will remain a core part of their operations. While virtual work will no longer be required as a safety measure, departments must still adhere to the [Virtual Work Policy for City Employees](#). All on-site operations must be conducted in accordance with these protocols.

When assessing which operations and employees should continue to function remotely, please consider the following:

1. What operations and functions can be conducted remotely without impacting overall productivity, efficiency, or service delivery?
2. Are employees in like job roles or titles (ex: executive assistant, laborer, supervisors, Deputy Commissioners) being handled in a consistent manner with regard to virtual work and on-site work? If not, please ensure that employees in like job roles or titles who can work from home are enabled with the appropriate technology and tools to do so to maintain consistency across titles and/or functions.
3. What level of supervision and/or administrative support is necessary on-site to support the employees in your departments who will be working on-site?

Protections Needed

- ✓ **Masks**

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- All employees and members of the public entering City facilities who are unvaccinated will be required to wear masks in all common areas such as restrooms, conference rooms, lobbies, elevators and hallways, except only:
 - As necessary for the employee to eat or drink during break times. The employee should maintain safe distance from others when taking off a mask.
 - When seated alone in a private office or in a cubicle whose sides extend above the head of the employee.
 - If someone else enters an office or cubicle while it's occupied by another, all individuals must put on a mask.
- Masks will continue to be required for all employees and members of the public regardless of vaccination status in the following settings:
 - Healthcare institutions including temporary community healthcare events such as vaccine clinics and blood drives
 - Congregate facilities such as prisons, shelters, and adult day programs
 - Public transportation including planes, trains, buses, taxis, and ride share vehicles
 - All indoor childcare settings, including schools, camps, early childhood education and childcare
- Employees shall follow the City's "Respiratory Guidance for City Employees" found [HERE](#). Employees may bring in their own, surgical mask, cloth mask, or respirator following this guidance. If an employee does not have access to a mask, the Department is required to provide one to the employee or any member of the public entering a City facility without a mask.
- If necessary, the City can provide one cloth mask each to any employees who are required to wear a mask to allow for cleaning and ready availability. Those whose jobs involve work hazards will be provided with a respirator consistent with their Departmental hazard assessments and respirator program.
- An Appointing Authority may request verification of an employee's vaccination status to ensure the employee is adhering to the appropriate safety protocols including, but not limited to, masking and isolation / quarantining after a probable COVID-19 exposure. An Appointing Authority shall not disclose such information to others and shall not alter an employee's work assignments based upon their vaccination status.
- An Appointing Authority is required to allow any employee to continue to wear a mask if they so choose.

✓ **Isolate**

- City Departments and employees will continue to follow the Public Health Guidelines on quarantine and isolation found [HERE](#). Please note that quarantine and isolation protocols will vary based upon whether an employee is fully vaccinated or not.
- All employees will respond to a daily questionnaire prior to their start of work, administered by their supervisor. The daily questionnaire will be implemented

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based on the needs of each Department. Guidance on how to access and administer this questionnaire can be found [HERE](#).

- Employees with COVID-19 symptoms should call their supervisor and stay home in accordance with the Public Health quarantining and isolation guidance found [HERE](#).
- Employees who become ill at work must notify their supervisor or appropriate person per the Department's protocol and be sent home immediately. Until the employee is able to leave the site, place the employee in a room or area where they are isolated from others to the extent feasible. The Department may work with the employee to arrange for suitable transportation to a medical treatment facility or residence, as necessary.
- Leave usage policies for COVID-19 can be found [HERE](#).

✓ **Reduce Crowds**

- While density and capacity restrictions will no longer be required, it is still recommended that employees and the public maintain a safe distance between themselves and others, especially if they are unvaccinated.

✓ **Barriers**

- It is recommended that sneezeguards or plexiglass screens be used in customer service settings in which there is regular and prolonged contact with the public to prevent respiratory droplets expelled by infected persons from reaching others.

✓ **Handwashing**

- Handwashing or hand sanitizer stations have been placed at building entry and other communal areas for all staff and visitors.
- Handwashing or hand sanitizing will be promoted through [posted signage](#) in restrooms and kitchens.
- Employees will be provided adequate levels of soap supply in all restrooms.
- Employees should wash their hands frequently or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when water and soap is not available. Use tissues or the crook of the arm or inner elbow to control coughs, sneezes, and the spread of germs.

✓ **Clean**

- The Department of Public Property or, in some cases, City Departments or landlords for leased space, will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting all work areas, such as offices, bathrooms, common spaces, and frequently touched surfaces. These cleaning protocols will be conducted prior to re-occupancy and routinely. For building cleaning protocols, contact your Departmental maintenance/facility coordinator.

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- Employees are asked to take responsibility for keeping their workspaces in clean, working order. Departments will provide disinfectant (EPA List N registered disinfectants) to enable employees to wipe down the high-touch surfaces in their own workspaces and offices in accordance with CDC guidelines found [HERE](#). Departments may purchase additional disinfectant supplies through one of the available city-wide contracts through the City's Procurement Department.
- All areas where a COVID-19 symptomatic employee has worked will be cleaned and disinfected.
- In the case of an employee who has tested positive for COVID-19 and has been in the workplace, Departments must contact the City's Emergency Operations Center at eoc.manager@phila.gov. The EOC will alert the Department of Public Property which will initiate deep cleaning protocols, as appropriate. Employees will be asked to temporarily relocate while this deep cleaning occurs.
- As of July 6, 2021, the following protocols will apply to all City-owned vehicles:
 - City vehicles in use by multiple City employees should be cleaned and disinfected by the occupant before and after each individual's use.
 - Employees must wear a mask/face covering if there is more than one person in a vehicle.
 - Employees should sit as far apart as possible in a vehicle. When practical, open windows when multiple occupants are in vehicle to ventilate space.

✓ **Planning**

- Departments, through the direction of their Departmental Safety Officer and Human Resource Manager, will continue to follow the current Risk Management protocols on suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the workplace. These protocols will be updated periodically and provided to these groups when updated.
- The City will continue to update its HR-related policies as necessary in response to COVID-19. These will be provided through City leadership for prompt dissemination to their employees. Current HR Policies for City employees in response to COVID-19 can be found [HERE](#).
- Departments are required to continue to track all costs associated with their response to the COVID-19 pandemic including any unbudgeted expenses related to re-opening their operations in compliance with these guidelines.

✓ **Vaccinate**

- Vaccination remains one of the most effective ways for us to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. While receiving a COVID-19 vaccine is not currently required, it is strongly encouraged for any eligible employee to get vaccinated.

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- Employees may earn 4 hours of special compensatory time when they provide proof, in the form of an official vaccination card, that they've completed their schedule of vaccination. A copy of an employee's vaccination card may be uploaded in OnePhilly through Employee Self-Service or be presented to the employee's HR manager.
 - Please note that this benefit does not apply to uniformed employees or those covered by binding interest arbitration.
- More information about the COVID-19 vaccine as well as how to sign up to received your COVID-19 vaccine can be found on the Health Department's website [HERE](#).

✓ **Communicate**

- Each Department has identified a Pandemic Coordinator, who is responsible for helping to educate staff about symptoms and prevention of COVID-19. The Pandemic Coordinator works with the Office of Risk Management to receive training and communication related to COVID-19 prevention and mitigation in the workplace.
- To ensure the mental well-being of our entire workforce, the City will promote and make available mental health and wellness resources for employees. These include, but are not limited to:
 - Information about the City's Employee Assistance Programs
 - Information related to mental health support via Health Care Providers Behavioral Health and Tele-behavioral programs.
 - Information about mental-health programming and resources available through the [Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services](#)
- Prominent signs have been posted throughout common areas within City buildings and in employee break rooms, bathrooms, and lobbies that include such things as the following:
 - Asking people who are sick or have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 within the past 10 days to stay home and follow CDC quarantining guidelines
 - Staff who have been fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine when exposed to someone with COVID-19 if they have remained asymptomatic since the COVID-19 exposure.
 - Encouraging people to cover coughs or sneezes
 - Mandating that all unvaccinated staff and visitors wear masks
 - Providing guidance on handwashing
 - Providing information on the COVID-19 vaccine

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The City of Philadelphia has print-ready posters that can be found [HERE](#).

- Prior to the re-opening of any City Department or operation, Departments will be responsible for sharing these protocols with their employees.
- As of July 6, 2021, Departments will be responsible for ensuring all employees working remotely have reviewed and signed an acknowledgement confirming receipt of the [Virtual Work Policy for City Employees](#). Additionally, employees working remotely can access various resources on remote work under the [“Getting Started with Technology”](#) and [“Adapting to Remote Work”](#) sections of the City’s Remote Work site. Additional training and guidance on remote work will be provided periodically to City Departments.